

THE BUSINESS, TECHNOLOGY & ART OF ANIMATION AND VFX

March
2015

ANIMATIONTM MAGAZINE



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"HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON 2"
IS A MOVIE THE
WORLD NEEDS."

JOE MORGENSTERN

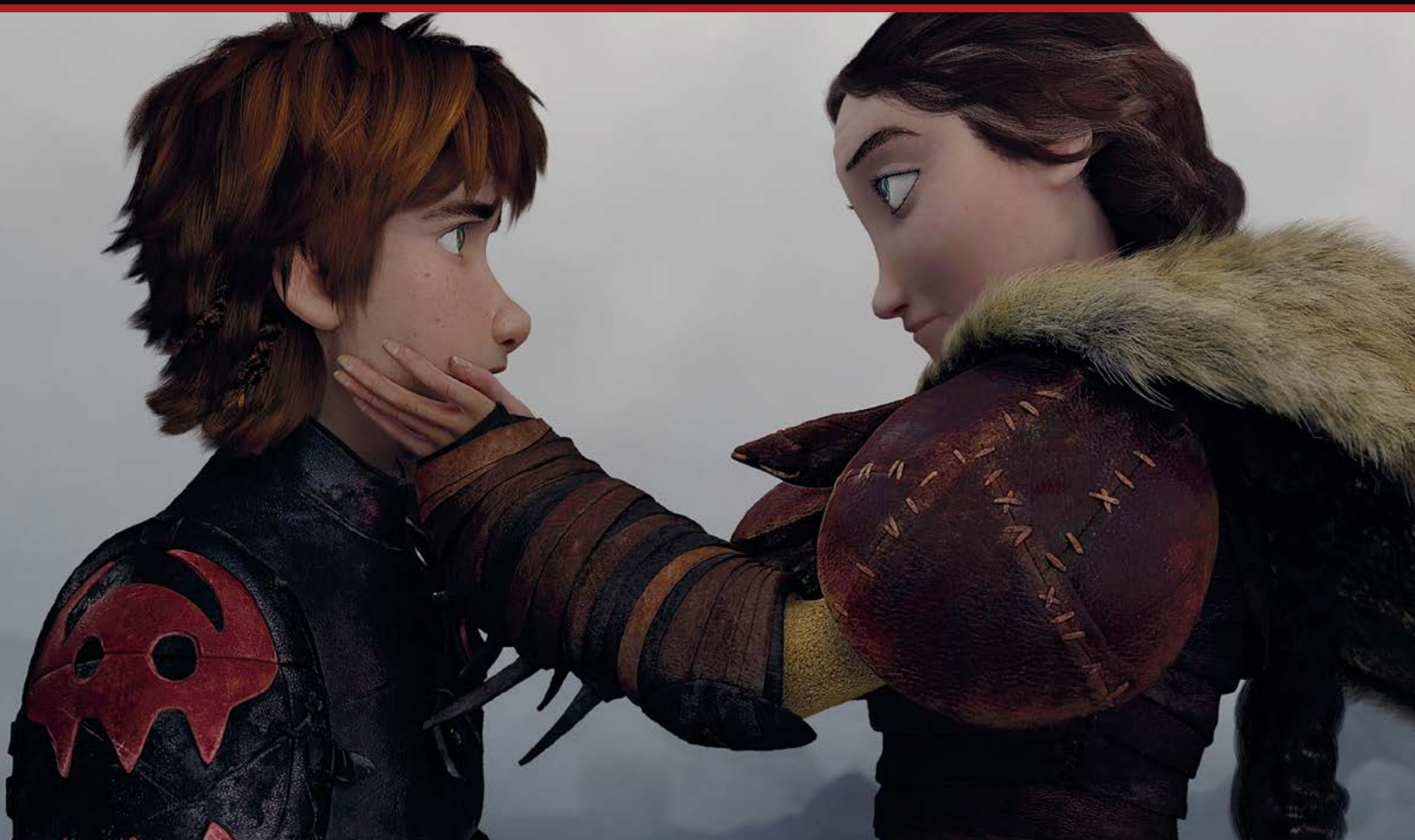
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

"...HIS (HICCUP'S) MOTHER IS VOICED BY CATE BLANCHETT WITH A
STARTLINGLY ORIGINAL
MIXTURE OF MATERNAL WARMTH,
SEDUCTIVE ALLURE AND CALM AUTHORITY."

JOE MORGENSTERN
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

*"You have the heart of a chief and the soul of a dragon.
Only you can bring our worlds together.
That is who you are, son."*

— Valka



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HOW TO TRAIN YOUR
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TM

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*Star vs. the
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VES and Oscars
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The Essential
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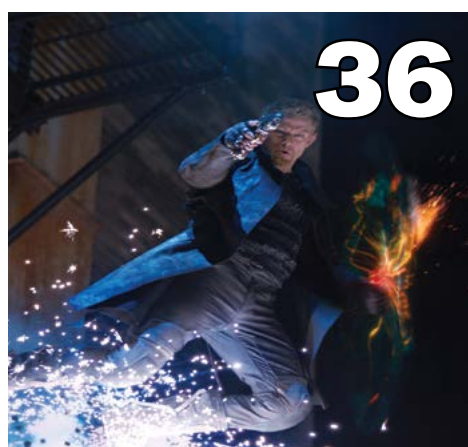
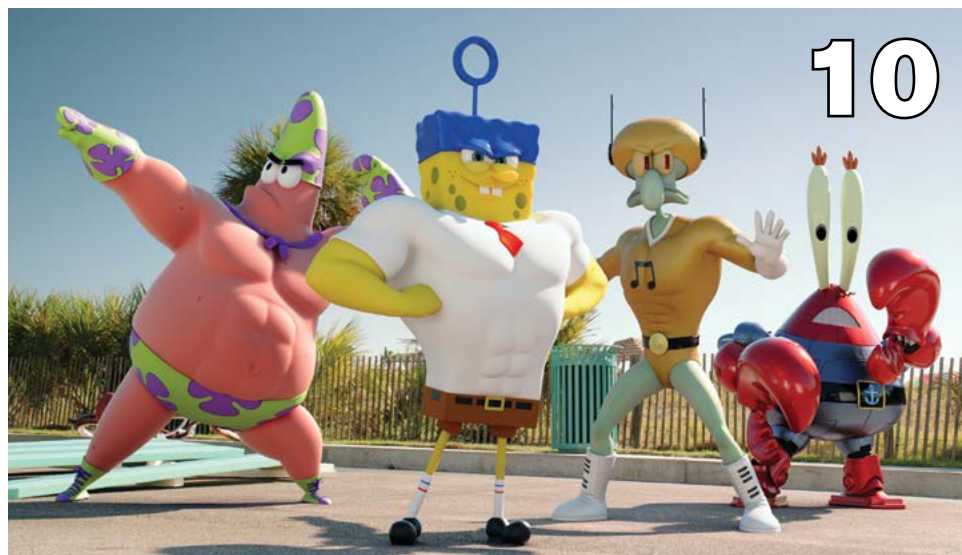


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Volume 29, Issue 3, Number 248

March 2015



Cover: Hit the beach with the stars of the new 3D feature *The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water*, out Feb. 6 from Nickelodeon and the new Paramount Animation.

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40 Q&A: Lane Lueras

The supervising director on DreamWorks' *The Adventures of Puss in Boots* walks us through the new Netflix series.

A note to our readers: VanArts would like to apologize to Bobby Chiu for using an image that was created by one of its students and based on one of Bobby's amazing works of art. The image was used by the school for advertising purposes in our last issue, unfortunately before securing permission. VanArts would like to say thank you to Bobby for his understanding and for continuing to inspire artists worldwide.



A Challenging Month

Well, 2015 isn't messing around. It's hard to remember a month when there's been as much turmoil and controversy in the animation world as in the first month of this year.

First, there was the attack Jan. 7 on the offices of the satirical French newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* that killed 12, including two of the nation's most-beloved cartoonists. The resulting protests saw thousands take to the streets even as the authorities tracked down and killed the perpetrators of this horrible act.

Then there's the ongoing turmoil at DreamWorks Animation. Rather than being able to focus on its win at the Golden Globes for *How to Train Your Dragon 2*, the entertainment world has been focused on the difficulties that forced the studio to shut down its PDI operation in Redwood City, eliminating 500 jobs, and changes in its management that leaves an uncertain future for the likes of Bill Damaschke – once thought to be a permanent fixture at the studio.

Even the normally sweet confection that is awards season has a bitter aftertaste this year after *The LEGO Movie* was not nominated for the Best Animated Feature Academy Award, despite having won plenty of accolades from groups long touted as bellwethers for Oscar success.

And it wasn't just the animated feature category that elicited cries of "snub!" from onlookers. The animated short category got flak for not nominating *Duet*, while the visual effects list puzzled fans and observers by omitting *The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies*.

But as in animation's best tradition of resilience, it should surprise no one that the cartoonists of *Charlie Hebdo* rebounded with a new issue that sold out millions of copies; that the people who've lost their jobs at DreamWorks have the potential to create their own new niche in the animation world; and that the quality of films that did make the cut for the Oscars nominations is of such high caliber as to quiet the complaints almost as quickly as they arise.

All of which foretells a year in which the good will outweigh the bad for animation. It won't be without its challenges, but it will be full of new creative and business opportunities for those willing to grab them. It's that spirit that we try to bring to every issue of *Animation Magazine* and every event we put on for this great industry. As such, be sure to mark your calendars for Nov. 1-4 for the fourth annual World Animation and VFX Summit, and we can all gather to plan the future, share a laugh and talk about how 2015 rebounded to be one of the best ever for this great business.

Peace.

Tom

Tom McLean
Editor
tom@animationmagazine.net

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I strongly condemn the horrific shooting. ... Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims of this terrorist attack and the people of France at this difficult time."

– President Barack Obama, on the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris.



ANIMATION MAGAZINE

March 2015

Vol. 29, Issue 3, No. 248
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Quantum List Marketing

480-860-6036

ANIMATION MAGAZINE

(USPS 015-877/ISSN 1041-617X)

Published monthly except for combined issues of April/May

August/September, by Animation Magazine

24943 Kit Carson Road

Calabasas, CA 91302

Periodicals postage paid at Woodland Hills Post Office CA,
And additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER:

SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO MAILING ADDRESS:

ANIMATION MAGAZINE

26500 W. Agoura Rd. Ste. 102-651

Calabasas, CA 91302

TO SUBSCRIBE:

For the U.S., the rate is \$60 for 1 year or \$95 for 2 years.

Rates for Canada and Mexico are US\$75 for 1 year or US\$120 for 2 years delivered by foreign airmail. Foreign rates are US\$90 for 1 year or US\$145 for 2 years delivered by foreign airmail. Please allow six to eight weeks for initial delivery. Also available in a digital version for \$36 for 1 year or \$60 for 2 years.

Animation Magazine

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"A Triumph Of Imagination."

BRIAN VINER / DAILY MAIL

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News & Notes

FEATURES

DreamWorks Shuffles Execs, Cuts 500 Jobs

It's been a month of change at DreamWorks Animation as the studio made moves that included some 500 job cuts to restructure its feature film business model in the wake of disappointing box office performance.

The changes began Jan. 4, when the company appointed veteran producers Bonnie Arnold and Mireille Soria as co-presidents of feature animation.

Arnold and Soria will oversee creative development and production for DreamWorks Animation's theatrical releases. Between them, they have produced eight films at DreamWorks grossing more than \$3.5 billion globally.

As part of this transition, chief creative officer Bill Damaschke will step down from his position. It's unclear if Damaschke will find a new role at the company or will move on.

The big ax fell Jan. 22, when DreamWorks announced it would be closing the DreamWorks/PDI studio in Redwood City, Calif., resulting in the loss of 500 jobs. The move came as the studio took a \$290 million pre-tax charge as part of the restructure.

While *How to Train Your Dragon 2* was a huge hit, grossing \$618 million worldwide, other recent releases have disappointed, with *Penguins of Madagascar* grossing \$321 million worldwide, *Mr. Peabody & Sherman* earned \$272 million worldwide, *Turbo* with \$282 million, and \$306 million worldwide for *Rise of the Guardians*.

The cuts are slated for this year and 2016. The studio expects to achieve an annual cost savings of about \$30 million in 2015 and hopes to double this by 2017, when the restructuring is expected to be complete.

DWA has said that its features productions will shift focus and cut down on its release schedule, limiting its output to two films per year (down from three) to be split between one original story and one sequel. The studio has been playing with its release schedule, having swapped dates for *Penguins of Madagascar* and *Home*, which is out March 27 as the studio's only 2015 release, and removing *B.O.O.: Bureau of Otherworldly Operations* from its summer release schedule.

Upcoming release dates on the studio's schedule include *Kung Fu Panda 3* (March 18, 2016), *Trolls* (Nov. 4, 2016), *Boss Baby* (Jan. 13, 2017), *The Croods 2* (Dec. 22, 2017), *Larrikins* (Feb. 16, 2018) and *How to Train Your Dragon 3* (June 29, 2018).



The 2015 officers of the VES Board of Directors are:

- Chair: Mike Chambers
- 1st Vice Chair: Nancy St. John
- 2nd Vice Chair: Richard Winn Taylor II
- Treasurer: Bob Coleman
- Secretary: Rita Cahill

FEATURES

GKIDS Acquires Studio Ghibli's 'Marnie' for North America

GKIDS continues its successful relationship with Studio Ghibli with a newly signed distribution agreement that will bring the animated feature *When Marnie Was There* (*Omoide no Marnie*) to North America. The deal includes all theatrical, non-theatrical, home video and television rights for the region. An English-language version is now in the works, overseen by Ghibli and Geoffrey Wexler, slated for release this spring.

FEATURES

'Maya the Bee' Movie Gets Limited U.S. Release from Shout!, Movie Grill

Shout! Factory Kids and Studio Movie Grill have teamed up to introduce kids and families in select U.S. cities to the buzzing world of fantasy and discovery in the *Maya the Bee Movie*. The CG animated feature has already found success with young audiences around the world and will begin its Stateside engagements March 8.

FESTS AND EVENTS

SIGGRAPH 2015 Selects Joichi Ito Of MIT Media Lab for Keynote Talk

Joichi "Joi" Ito, MIT Media Lab Director, will be the keynote speaker for SIGGRAPH 2015, the 42nd International Conference and Exhibition on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques.

Formerly listed as a *Time* magazine "Cyber-Elite" (1997) and among *BusinessWeek's* "25 Most Influential People on the Web" (2001), he has served as both board chairman and CEO of Creative Commons, and currently sits on the boards of The New York Times Company, Knight Foundation, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and Sony Corp.

SIGGRAPH 2015 will take place Aug. 9-13 at the Los Angeles Convention Center in Los Angeles.

FESTS AND EVENTS

'Bob's Burgers' Renewed; Live Show Tour Planned

Loren Bouchard's Emmy-winning animated comedy *Bob's Burgers* has been renewed for a 22-episode sixth season on Fox and will be heading out on the road this year with *Bob's Burgers Live!*

VIP ticket pre-sales have launched at bobsburgerslivevip.com, which shows tour stops across the Midwest and East Coast.

The show features voice stars H. Jon Benjamin (Bob), Kristen Schaal (Louise), Eugene Mirman (Gene), Dan Mintz (Tina) and John Roberts (Linda), along with creator/producer Bouchard. Performances will include a lively mix of stand-up comedy, Q&A with fans, a live *Bob's Burgers* table read and an exclusive sneak peek at an upcoming episode.



FESTS AND EVENTS

Visual Effects Society Announces 2015 Board of Directors, Chairman

The Visual Effects Society has announced its 2015 board of directors, with Mike Chambers elected as board chairman.

FESTS AND EVENTS

6 Point Harness, Toon Boom Host Storyboarding Workshop

6 Point Harness and Toon Boom Animation are teaming up to offer a free, two-day storyboarding

workshop for aspiring animators with guest instructor Matt Danner.

The first workshop will take place Feb. 21 from 9 a.m.–5 p.m. at 6PH's new Echo Park facility in Los Angeles. A panel of industry professionals will select 30 participants after reviewing the submitted applications and body of work.

The workshop will entail instruction by Danner, additional guest lecturers and a lesson on using Toon Boom's Storyboard Pro.

After the session, participants will be asked to create groups of three and then each group will be responsible for storyboarding one act of an 11-minute script. On March 14, the groups will return to 6PH to pitch their projects to directors, who will provide feedback and notes.

Toon Boom will grant one-month Toon Boom Storyboard Pro licenses so that participants can complete the assignment.

To be considered, hopeful participants must fill out an application at: www.sixpointharness.com/storyclass/.

FESTS AND EVENTS

London Studios Offered Animation Placement Funding

Film London and Creative Access are co-funding 12 entry-level placements for London-based creative companies looking for new animation talent. The fund will support a dozen full-time positions paid at London Living Wage, providing 75 percent of the fee for the first six months and 50 percent for six months thereafter.

The initiative is intended to address the lack of diversity across the local screen industries, offering custom-tailored talent matching between companies and graduate-caliber creatives from minority ethnic backgrounds. The chance for funding is open to all employers working in animation, including studios specializing in film, TV and advertising production.

In BRIEF

Disney pushed back the release of *The Jungle Book* to April 15, 2016, and set an Aug. 12, 2016, release date for *Pete's Dragon*. The studio also has planted a flag on April 14, 2017, for a live-action version of the anime *Ghost in the Shell* starring Scarlet Johansson. ... James Cameron told the Associated Press not to expect the first *Avatar* sequel until 2017. ... The *Angry Birds* animated feature has been bumped up to May 20, 2016. ... Fox pushed back a week the release of *Alvin and the Chipmunks 4* to Dec. 23, 2015. ... The CW has renewed both *Arrow* and *The Flash* live-action TV series and announced an animated *Vixen* series set in the same universe for its digital-only network CWSeed. ... CBS has cast *Glee* actress Melissa Benoist as the lead for its hour-long live-action pilot for *Supergirl*. ... Alice Webb, currently COO of BBC England, has been appointed the new director of BBC Children's. ... Framestore VFX supervisor William Bartlett has been made an executive creative director. ... Mandy Patinkin is in talks to voice Papa Smurf in Sony's upcoming animated reboot of *The Smurfs*. ... *Penn Zero: Part-Time Hero* is set for a simulcast premiere Feb. 13 at 9:45 p.m., ET/PT on Disney XD and Disney Channel, with three additional episodes premiering over the President's Day holiday weekend on Disney XD.

PASSINGS

Christine Cavanaugh, an actress who provided voices for such popular animated TV shows as *Rugrats*, *Darkwing Duck*, *Aladdin*, *The Powerpuff Girls* and *Wild Kratts*, died Dec. 22. She was 51.

Andras Erkel, founder of Hungary-based Studio Baestarts, died Dec. 29 from brain cancer. He was 52.

Walt Peregoy, who worked as the color stylist on Disney's classic feature *101 Dalmatians*, died Jan. 16. He was 89.

FESTS AND EVENTS

Your 2015 Awards Season Scorecard

Here's what animated projects are winning the nominations and the hardware around town this awards season.

GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS

- **Best Animated Feature:** *How to Train Your Dragon 2*

PGA AWARDS

- **Best Animated Feature:** *The LEGO Movie*

CRITICS CHOICE AWARDS

- **Best Animated Feature:** *The LEGO Movie*
- **Best Visual Effects:** *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*

CINEMA AUDIO SOCIETY AWARDS

- **Nominees for Best Sound Mixing in Animated Feature:** *Big Hero 6*, *The Boxtrolls*, *How to Train Your Dragon 2*, *The LEGO Movie* and *Penguins of Madagascar*.
- Additionally, *Family Guy* was nominated the half-hour TV series category for the episode "The Simpsons Guy"

MOTION PICTURE SOUND EDITORS AWARDS

- **Nominees for Best Sound Editing in an Animated Feature:** *Big Hero 6*, *Book Of Life*, *The Boxtrolls*, *How To Train Your Dragon 2* and *The LEGO Movie*.
- **Nominees for Best Sound Editing in a Direct-to-Video Animation:** *The Boxcar Children*; *The Pirate Fairy*; *Rainbow Brite*; *Scooby Doo and the Wrestle-Mania Mystery*; *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, "Sacrifice."
- **Nominees for Sound Editing in Game Cinematics:** *Far Cry 4*; *Halo: Master Chief Collection 2014*; *League Of Legends* – "A New Dawn"; *Overwatch* – "The Exhibit"; *Star Citizen*; *World of Warcraft* – *Warlords of Draenor Intro Cinematic*.
- **Nominees for Best Effects, Foley, Dialogue and ADR in Television Animation:** *The 7D*, "Buckets / Frankengloom"; *Gravity Falls*, "Into the Bunker"; *Penn Zero: Part-Time Hero*, "North Pole Down"; *Sofia The First*, "The Curse of Princess Ivy"; *Star Wars: Rebels*, "Gathering Forces"; *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, "In Dreams"; *Ultimate Spider-Man*, "The Spider-Verse: Part 1."

Cartoonists Among 12 Killed in Paris Terror Attack

Two gunmen attacked the Paris headquarters of French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* Jan. 7, killing 12. The assault was made as the editorial team was having its weekly meeting, and two of France's most treasured contemporary cartoonists – *Charlie Hebdo*'s editor-in-chief Stephane "Charb" Charbonnier and Jean "Cabu" Cabut – were among the victims.

The gunmen, later identified as brothers Chérif and Saïd Kouachi, used assault rifles in the attack, reportedly shouting "Allahu Akbar." The pair were pursued by French police and shot dead on Jan. 9. The brothers were Algerian immigrants and were under suspicion for activities related to terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda.

Charlie Hebdo had long been criticized by Muslims both in France and around the world for publishing multiple satirical cartoons that portrayed the Islamic prophet Muhammad, a blasphemous act in that religion.

The brutality of the attack prompted an outpouring of support from around the world, with millions showing their support with signs using the phrase "Je suis Charlie," French for "I am Charlie."

Demonstrations held the night of the shooting across France drew more than 100,000 protesters condemning the attacks and supporting free speech.

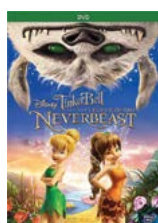
The magazine's staff vowed to soldier on and produced the next issue of the magazine on schedule, featuring an image on the cover of Muhammad holding a "Je suis Charlie" sign and the headline "Tout est pardonné," or "All is forgiven." The issue sold out despite an extra 1 million copies having been printed.

March Planner

2-6 San Francisco hosts the annual **Game Developers Conference** featuring the latest in interactive tech, as well as the **Independent Games Festival**. (gdconf.com | igf.com)



3 Lots of kid-friendly DVDs out today: **Tinker Bell and the Legend of the NeverBeast**, **Barbie in Princess Power**, **Paw Patrol: Marshall and Chase on the Case**, **Lalaloopsy: Festival of Sugary Sweets**, **Bubble Guppies: Fin-Tastic Collection**.



4-6 Catch the next big wave of European animation at **Cartoon Movie** in Lyon, France. (cartoon-media.eu)



6 Neill Blomkamp's **Chappie** puts a new twist on silver screen robots.

10 **The Legend of Korra: Book Four, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Retreat!**, **Alpha and Omega 3: The Great Wolf Games** and blast from the past **Fireball XL5: The Complete Series** hit shelves today.



13 The iconic toon princess returns to theaters in Kenneth Branagh's live-action **Cinderella**.

17 **The Flintstones and WWE: Stone Age Smackdown**, **Bleach**



Uncut Set 24 and the Pet Pals adventure **Eggy** are on disc today.



18-22 **Holland Animation Film Festival**

kicks off in Utrecht – this year's leader is created by Konstantin Bronzit. (haff.nl)



19-25

The European Animation Center presents the 10th annual

Athens Animfest in Greece this week. (athensanimfest.eu/en)



27 DreamWorks' **Home** is the hot theater ticket this month, starring Rihanna as human teen Tip and Jim Parsons as alien Oh.

31 Happy birthday to Disney-Pixar prez **Ed Catmull**!



To get your company's events and products listed in this monthly calendar, please e-mail mercedes@animationmagazine.net.

Books We Love

The Art of Home

By Ramin Zahed
[Insight Editions, \$45]

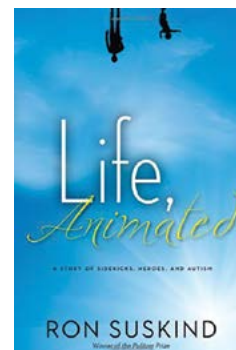
This month, DreamWorks Animation introduces audiences to a new alien race with the CG odd couple comedy *Home*. Tim Johnson's adaptation of the Adam Rex book *The True Meaning of Smekday* follows a resourceful human girl (voiced by Rihanna) and her ostracized alien road trip partner (Jim Parsons) as they evade the invading Boov and their vainglorious leader. The handsome hardcover is packed with concept art, characters and design inspirations to show how the DWA team took Rex's story from page to screen. And interviews with key animation talent provide the behind-the-scenes scoop on the studio's out-of-this-world entry to the 2015 movie scene. Punchy colors, inventive vehicles, marshmallow-y aliens and a butt-kicking young heroine – what more could you, or your coffee table, want?



Life, Animated: A Story of Sidekicks, Heroes, and Autism

By Ron Suskind
[Kingswell, \$26.99]

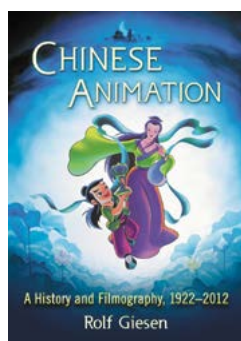
It's not news to us or our readers that animation has an incredible power to tell stories and draw people in to endlessly imaginative worlds. But what if the fantastical images on the screen were your only window to the human experience? In this incredible real-life story, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Ron Suskind describes a person living such a reality: his autistic son, Owen. Non-verbal for years, Owen and his parents found a way to turn his obsessive memorization of Disney movies into an original language. Suskind describes how the family found themselves becoming characters, using Disney dialog and the films' iconic songs to communicate with Owen in his separate world. This unique family's story inspires readers to think about life, love and storytelling from all new angles.



Chinese Animation: A History and Filmography, 1912–2012

By Rolf Giesen
[McFarland, \$55]

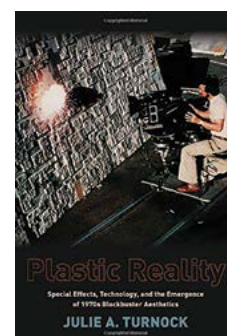
With the same tenacity that drove the country to the forefront of manufacturing and industry, China has pushed to develop its local media enterprises in an astonishingly short time. Now, the country produces more than 250,000 minutes of animated content annually. But this is just the latest turn in Chinese animation's rich tradition. Rolf Giesen, who served as a visiting professor of animation in Beijing and is president of the Jilin Animation, Comics and Games Museum in Changchun, does his best to cover 90 years of history in this 200-plus page volume. Giesen uses his expertise in the industry and knowledge of the country to guide Western readers through its birth, Golden Age and latest developments. In addition to classics like *Princess Iron Fan* and *Havoc in Heaven*, and TV hits like *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf*, little-known auteurs and up and coming young filmmakers also are covered. In these pages, readers will find a truly comprehensive guide to the Chinese animation powerhouse through the ages.



Plastic Reality: Special Effects, Technology, and the Emergence of 1970s Blockbuster Aesthetics

By Julie A. Turnock
[Columbia Univ. Press, \$30]

The wizards of visual effects are constantly finding ways to up the ante as each stunning blockbuster takes the limits of technology and artistry and pushes them further and further. As incredible as the fusion of human imagination and digital production can be, it's equally astounding to look back on the evolution of film effects. Like a modern city architect puzzling over Stonehenge, sometimes the innovations behind earlier camera tricks seem even more impressive than today's push-button dazzle. By looking at a very specific period of film, which gave us such epics as *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and the original *Star Wars*, Julie Turnock shows how developments in effects changed Hollywood significantly. Turnock traces the technological, cultural and aesthetic influence of seminal '70s flicks through the '80s, and wraps up with a look at modern practices and the future of filmmaking.



– Mercedes Milligan



SpongeBob Gets Real

The long-lived Nickelodeon TV series star enters the third dimension for his second movie outing, *Sponge Out of Water*. By Tom McLean.

SpongeBob SquarePants has been successfully living in a pineapple under the sea since 1999, entertaining millions of all ages via the hit Nickelodeon animated series and a 2004 big-screen outing. And with the TV show still in production, it took a bigger than usual story idea for the crew over-seeing Bikini Bottom's most famous resident to bring SpongeBob and his friends back to the big screen for *The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water*, due Feb. 6 in theaters in stereoscopic 3D.

"We didn't want to make a movie unless we had a story we thought was worthy of being made into a movie," says Paul Tibbitt, the movie's director and co-writer and

executive producer of the TV series. "They (the studio) said we really want to make a movie, so we took a little time and we had a story that we were going to make into a TV episode but we liked it so much and we thought it had potential for a bigger arc, so we made that into the movie."

The result is a movie – the first released under the new Paramount Animation shingle – that takes SpongeBob, Patrick, Squidward, Sandy, Mr. Krabs and Plankton out of their natural 2D animated underwater habitat to the real world and a hybrid of CG animation and live-action.



The tale begins when the top-secret recipe for Krabby Patties is stolen, bringing apocalyptic-style ruin to the undersea denizens of Bikini Bottom. That forces SpongeBob and his friends to team up with his foe, Plankton, and head to the surface to recover the recipe from the fiendish pirate Burger Beard,



A CG SpongeBob and a live-action Antonio Banderas share a moment in *The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water*.

played in live action by Antonio Banderas.

The TV voice cast reprises its roles for the film: Tom Kenny as SpongeBob, Bill Fagerbakke as Patrick, Rodger Bumpass as Squidward, Carolyn Lawrence as Sandy, Clancy Brown as Mr. Krabs and Mr. Lawrence as Plankton. Tibbitt and Mary Parent produced the movie, which is built on a story by Tibbitt and *SpongeBob* creator Stephen Hillenburg and a screen-

fans of the show, so when they sent their first test over we could tell right away that they got it, they understood the acting in the show and the energy of it," he says.

Creative director Vince Waller, also a veteran of the *SpongeBob* TV series, agrees. "They studied all of our shows and took note of how we moved the characters and the different expressions they make, and how they

might be able to make them look right from the front or a side view, but what happens to his cheek when he turns around? We had to figure out how to do those cheats in the computer."

A Job for SpongeBob

With the script giving the characters a superhero makeover, those new versions of the iconic characters also had to be developed for CG animation. "We went through probably 50 or 60 designs for each of them, trying to figure out how they're going to look; from long capes to short capes, whether SpongeBob had muscly legs or not," says Waller. "We chose not. It just wasn't him with human legs."

Different characters got different styles, with Sandy most notably transforming her cartoony self into a realistic looking squirrel. "They did a few versions of her as a superhero and I think we just decided that because in the show whenever they did anything where she was her true self, it was just a photo of a squirrel, so it just made sense to stay true to that," says Waller.

The CG characters had to be integrated into the live-action sequences, which were shot on location in Savannah, Ga., under the direction of Mike Mitchell. While those sequences were previsualized by Halon, reality intruded in ways that animated shows rarely have to deal with.

"In animation, there's so much more control over the environment," says Tibbitt. "If you

"The main challenge was: Are you going to be able to turn these 3D models around? You might be able to make them look right from the front or a side view, but what happens to his cheek when he turns around? We had to figure out how to do those cheats in the computer."

— Paul Tibbitt, director, producer and co-writer, *The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water*.

play by Jonathan Aibel and Glenn Berger.

Coming Right at You

The most obvious new territories the movie tackles are CG animation and stereoscopic 3D, with the former handled by Australia-based Illoura and the latter by StereoD. Rough Draft Studios handled the 2D animation, as it does for the TV series.

Tibbitt says heading into the project there was a fair bit of trepidation over translating SpongeBob to CG animation — concerns Illoura easily and quickly laid to rest. "They were all

make them and literally the timing between our expressions and how they moved from one to the other," he says.

Getting the look right for the CG versions of the character was less of an animation challenge than a model challenge, says Tibbitt.

"The big challenge was just these characters, as hand drawn characters, they're cheats on cheats," he says. "They're quirky designs, so when we draw them we do a lot of cheats when we show them from different angles. So the main challenge was: Are you going to be able to turn these 3D models around? You



Banderas plays the pirate Burger Beard, whose scenes were shot both practically and with a greenscreen. Below, right, director Paul Tibbitt talks with Tom Kenny, the voice of SpongeBob.



want to put the camera in a place that seems impossible, you just draw everything from that angle. ... But you realize once you get there that we can't really put the camera a quarter of an inch above the ground."

For example, one sequence sees SpongeBob and friends spot a man sleeping on the beach and mistake him for a giant, hairy, beached porpoise. They attempt to roll him back into the water, using all their strength to partially roll him over before it becomes too much and he rolls back on top of the animated characters.

The live-action plate for that scene was shot with practical effects in camera, with a wire harness used to make the crewmember appear to move at the hands of the animated creatures to create a plate Illoura could animate to, Tibbitt says.

Taking 2D Deeper

The first part of the movie is in traditional 2D animation and used the same models as

the TV show with perhaps only the most minor of tweaks. "We might have gone in and redrawn them just to have a cleaner line for the higher-res version," Waller says.

Some effects were added to the 2D shots, like caustic lighting effects and particles in the water – both beyond the budget of a TV series – to help give the feature a look of its own.

While the CG animation is getting a lot of attention, Waller says he's most impressed by what was done in converting the 2D animation to stereo 3D. "You can feel the roundness of the eyes, all the characters – everyone has shape," Waller says. "It blew my socks off."

The longer schedule of the feature was a relative luxury for those used to working under TV conditions, Waller says. "Oftentimes, we'll get shows and we'll work on them and we'll try to punch them up and make them funnier, but you only have a very limited window to get the show out the door," he says. "We definitely had more time to hone it and get it to where we wanted it to be."

That also gave the filmmakers time to experiment in ways the TV show does not. For example, Screen Novelties animated one character that is essentially a rubber puppet via stop-motion. "We have one character as a stop-action character and then we also did some different styles for a couple of scenes just to make the movie feel big in scope compared to the TV show," says Tibbitt.

With production on the movie completed, Tibbitt and Waller are both back at work on the *SpongeBob SquarePants* TV series at Nickelodeon, offering a few final thoughts on the experience:

"It's much harder to tell a SpongeBob story over two hours than it is over 11 minutes," says Tibbitt. "I think that was part of what made the transition from TV to movie easy for me was just that it was just like making a really long *SpongeBob* episode. We tried not to change our approach too much and I think we can just sort of go back to telling a few jokes and keeping it short and sweet." ♦

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Hitting a New Note

Lucasfilm digs into the details in forging its own take on the musical animated fairy-tale with Strange Magic. By Tom McLean.

Strange Magic, the new animated feature film from Lucasfilm, seems to have arrived rather suddenly, having only been first announced a few months ago. Yet despite a critical and commercial drubbing, the movie succeeds in offering a new take on the musical animated fairy tale genre.

Based on a story by George Lucas, *Strange Magic* has been in the works at Lucasfilm for quite a while and was considered something of a studio passion project, says director Gary Rydstrom, who worked for Lucasfilm for years as a sound re-recording mixer on everything from *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* to the *Star Wars* prequels. After a stint away, including a time at Pixar where he directed the *Toy Story* short *Hawaiian Vacation*, Rydstrom returned to Lucasfilm a couple years ago and found himself directing *Strange Magic*, the company's second animated feature film after 2011's *Rango*.

Rydstrom says his experience in animation and sound made him perfectly suited to the project, which features songs as diverse as Elvis Presley's "Can't Help Falling in Love," Heart's "Straight On" and Kelly Clarkson's "Stronger." With a screenplay by David Berenbaum, Irene Mecchi and Rydstrom, the movie features the voices of Evan Rachel Wood as Marianne, Alan Cumming as Bog King, Kristin Chenoweth as the Sugarplum Fairy, Elijah Kelley as Sunny and Sam Palladio as Roland.

It debuted in theaters Jan. 23 via Touchstone Pictures.

Strange Magic tells the tale of a forest split in half between the light part where the fairies and elves live, and the dark part full of nasty creatures ruled by the Bog King. When fairy prince Roland decides to win back the heart of ex-fiancée Marianne, he sends an elf named Sunny into the dark forest to retrieve a magic love potion from the captured Sugarplum Fairy. The potion isn't necessary, however, for Marianne – who heads off to rescue Sunny – to find love in the most unexpected of places.

Rydstrom says the resources Lucasfilm and ILM offered the film gave it a chance to create a unique look. "Lucasfilm is not an animation company," he says. "It's nice that it can do animation, but it does live action, too, so I think that informs the look of the movie and the an-

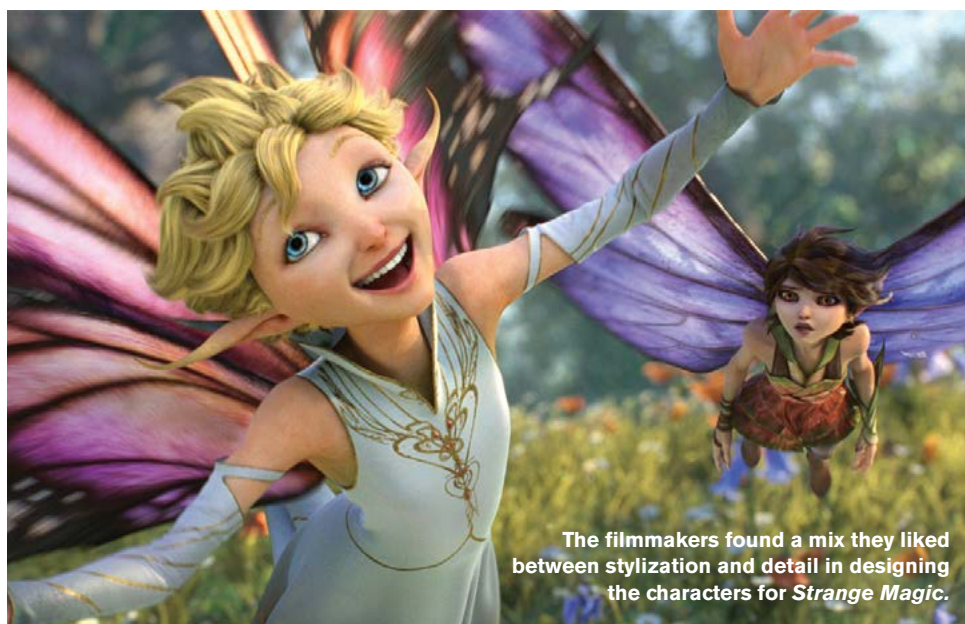
imation of the movie because it doesn't come from just an animation background ... It was nice to find our own look and style."

Original Vision

Visual effects supervisor Tony Plett says his main goal was to develop the look of the movie and make it look like nothing else out there.

"We wanted to get something that was very different from oversaturated colors," he says. "We went really pretty dark overall with high contrast. The main thing was dealing with a lot of complementary colors, so wherever we had these warm blues, we tried to add these oranges and yellows and really tried to push the look of the movie to get a lot of textural and geometric detail in there, but also really try to light this kind of real world style."





The filmmakers found a mix they liked between stylization and detail in designing the characters for *Strange Magic*.

They started with actual photography, even going out into the area around Lucas Valley Ranch and shooting photos of small creeks. "We were quickly finding out that even at this small level there's so much detail in these photographs that we were saying, how were we going to deal with this."

Depth of field and lighting were essential keys to finding a finished look, Plett says. "There's so much detail in these environments and characters, we had to really try to focus your eye on certain areas just based on depth of field and also really kind of trying to light and vignette certain areas throughout all the show."

The character designs and models were very detailed, which caused some worry early on but led to new techniques for making the animation natural and realistic.

Characters were detailed but stylized enough to avoid the uncanny valley effect, a tough nut to crack but an important one for the film. "Once we figured that formula out it started to become quite easy where we were trying to get it to look realistic but not photo-real because the characters are not trying to match geometrically what humans look like," Rydstrom says.

"It all started working out," says Plett. "With all the detail and the level of rendering, we could really push the level of animation – at least facial (animation) – for the characters."

While ILM has done groundbreaking work with motion-capture, all the work in *Strange Magic* was done via key-frame animation at Lucasfilm Animation Singapore and ILM in San Francisco.

"That's the way the animators like to do it, is act it out and think about it," says Rydstrom. "I've never animated but I love working with animators because they're like actors."

Supervised by Kim Ooli in the Singapore studio, animators would videotape their own performances for reference and drew extensively from the voice performances and video recordings of the voice actors.

"When I recorded the voice actors, I deliberately didn't watch them because I wanted to hear their voice on its own to hear if I was getting in the voice only what I was looking for," says Rydstrom. "I think the animators are happily taking little movements and quirks and attitudes and expressions from Alan Cumming and Evan Rachel Wood and Maya Rudolph, and that's fun."



The blend between the character design, the voice performance and the animation was at times perfect, Rydstrom says.

"That's the magic of animation to me, when the voice and the animated character match, and they come together and they feel like a living, breathing character sitting right in front of you," he says. "When that works, I'm happy."

On the technical side, this level of detail required a new tool called Metropolis, which was developed to push the geometry through the renderers. "(It) was actually a way to populate these environments to get a lot of detail, so we could scatter hundreds of thousands of rocks, we could add hundreds of thousands of blades of grass, we could do everything to the extreme of these environments to make them look extremely detailed."

Making It Sing

Putting songs into the film was an ongoing process for the film, Rydstrom says. Music director Marius de Vries went through many possible options before arriving at choices that fit the movie's story and the characters' state of mind.

"The whole idea of musical structure is not something I knew much about," says Rydstrom. "My job as the naive watcher of musicals was to make sure that any moment a character breaks into song doesn't feel out of place."

He cites as a favorite the Deep Purple song "Mistreated," which plays as the Bog King returns home to find the Sugarplum Fairy's magical love potion has gone missing. "Almost all the songs, the lyrics make sense for what's going on in the character's head at that moment," he says. "It was hard to do but I can't tell you how much fun it was to do a musical."

Animating the songs presented some interesting challenges. "Usually you can cut frames wherever you like and you can re-edit things," says Plett. "Having these songs, you're pretty much locked in and it trickles all the way down to the recordings, where it's not just a simple re-recording of dialog."

Getting right the facial expressions of characters singing also was difficult. "You have to really hit those shapes properly, and when you don't, you really notice it, as far as expressions and synch," says Plett.

Rydstrom says he thinks the level of heart the crew put into the movie can be seen in the final product – and he hopes audiences feel the same way. "I hope people, especially people who love animation, will see something a little bit different looking, something that has the personality of this company," says Rydstrom. "I like that, I like that it's different." ♦

A Hero from Home

Animex steps up to show what Mexican animation can do with the CG feature *El Americano*.

By Tom McLean.

Mexico has a long and rich history, a deep culture and a great love of animation. All of which made Ricardo Arnaiz wonder why his home nation produced so little original animation.

"For more than 30 years or so, there were no Mexican animated movies coming out," says Arnaiz, who founded in 2000 Animex Producciones in his hometown of Puebla. "So I decided to go try to make this happen. Let's try to make Mexican movies like the Hayao Miyazaki movies that tell Japanese folklore and stories. Why not (do the same thing) with Mexico?"

That began a journey that has lead Arnaiz to co-write and co-direct the CG animated feature *El Americano*, due for a U.S. theatrical release in March. *El Americano* tells the tale of a young parrot named Cuco, whose family owns a circus in Puebla that is threatened by a group of bullying birds. He decides to seek help from El Americano, the star of his favorite American TV show, and heads north with his friends to convince the superhero to come to his family's aid. When Cuco realizes his hero is only an actor in a fantasy show, he learns he is the hero his family needs.

A co-production between Animex, Olmos Productions and Phil Roman Entertainment, *El Americano* features the voices of *Modern Family*'s Rico Rodriguez as Cuco, as well as Cheech Marin, Kate del Castillo, Paul Rodriguez, Edward James Olmos, Erik Estrada and Lisa Kudrow. Arnaiz wrote the story with Dulce Belchez and Fernando Lewels, with the screenplay by Arnaiz, Phil Roman and *SpongeBob SquarePants* veteran Richard Pursel. Arnaiz and Disney animator and comic-book creator Mike Kunkel directed.

Arnaiz's association with Roman, a legend in the animation industry as the founder of original *The Simpsons* animation studio Film Roman, goes back to his first animated film, 2007's *La Leyenda de la Nahuala*.

Arnaiz reached out to Roman as a fellow Mexican-American for advice on the project, which Roman originally said was impossible to make with



Arnaiz's limited resources and ambitious schedule.

"Against all odds, we premiered the movie on time and we made it to the Morelia Film Festival, one of the most important here in Mexico, and we showed the movie and everybody was laughing," says Arnaiz. "Phil later wrote me a letter saying, 'You know, Ricardo, you have shown me that when Mexicans say they can do something, they can. They really can.'"

Seeking a Partner

Arnaiz's film *Nikte* had the misfortune of opening in theaters in Mexico the same day as James Cameron's *Avatar*, resulting in disappointing box office. He then decided to seek out a co-production with an American partner for his next project, which began when producer Gerry Cardoso brought in an





Young Cuco helps set up his family's circus, which he tries to save by traveling north to find *El Americano*, the heroic star of his favorite American TV show.



"They taught everyone how to make animation, Hollywood style; and in Mexico, we taught the Americans how to do it with low budgets."

— Ricardo Arnaiz, co-writer, producer, co-director of *El Americano*.



idea about birds that travel from Spain to Mexico.

"I said it would be great to make them go from Mexico to the United States, so we started from that," Arnaiz says.

That required a certain political agnosticism, Arnaiz says.

"We were very careful to be respectful of both countries," he says. "We wanted to tell a story about how borders are just a line on a map and when you are honest and you do things the right way there are a lot of possibilities out there for everybody."

He was surprised to find a fan in Olmos, who had seen *La Leyenda de la Nahuala* and signed on as both voice actor and executive producer of the project.

Animex had previously worked only in 2D animation and was just starting to explore CG animation

when Olmos said the film had to be in CG and stereoscopic 3-D to have the best chance of success.

With a budget of \$4 million, Arnaiz found his way to Boxel Animation Studio, a company founded by Andres Reyes Botello in Tijuana that primarily did computer animation for things like games and the medical industry.

"They were very creative, they had a lot of knowledge, and I said: 'Would you be interested in doing a movie with me? I don't know anything about CGI, you don't know anything about making movies — let's combine and create this thing together,'" says Arnaiz.

Tapping into his personal contacts, Arnaiz brought in veteran director Raul Garcia as animation director and Kunkel, a personal friend he had long hoped to work with, and brought them down to Tijuana to make the movie.

"They taught everyone how to make animation, Hollywood style; and in Mexico, we taught the Americans how to do it with low budgets," says Arnaiz.

Getting to Work

It was hard work, Arnaiz admits. About 20 to 25 animators were working at Boxel in Tijuana, handling about 80 percent of the work, including lighting, shading, stereoscopy, layout and modeling. A partner studio in the Philippines — Cutting Edge Productions — helped out with animation and crowd scenes.

"The biggest challenge was to get it to the level that everyone was hoping for us," says Arnaiz. "They thought at first that we were going to go to like a direct-to-video quality at the most, and once we showed them some clips they were really excited about it."

The film was completed on schedule and on budget, Arnaiz says, taking about 14 to 16 months for the movie to go from pre-production to the start of rendering.

The movie will be released in both English and Spanish, with most of the voice cast members playing their characters in both versions.

While a distributor for the United States and Mexico has not yet been officially announced, Arnaiz says the film will be independently distributed. The producers are raising the funds to promote the film to primarily Latino audiences in the U.S. with the assistance of ThinkLatino, an advertising and publicity company, he says.

What impact *El Americano* will have on the animation market in the United States or Mexico is still to be seen, but Arnaiz says he's pleased to have contributed to the rising quality and prominence of Mexican animation and told a good story in the process.

"It's a good message for Mexicans looking for the American dream and realizing that while they were looking out there, it's inside them," he says. "I think it's a very good message for everybody." ♦



An Open Mix

Remote Argentina studio San Luis Cine builds a pipeline around Blender and V-Ray to make its first animated feature, *Kiribati*. By Tom McLean.

The challenges facing production on any animated feature are pretty consistent — no matter where they are being done: the need to produce a lot of high-quality work in a short time.

In the case of *Kiribati*, a stereoscopic 3-D animated feature film in production in Argentina at San Luis Cine, the challenges are being met with an unusual tech approach that uses the open-source software Blender to animate and V-ray to render.

Ignacio Corrales, lighting director and shading supervisor on the movie, says the workflow was designed to allow artists to collaborate remotely as smoothly as possible.

"Before I started working on the movie, I wasn't familiar with Blender at all, having grown up with 3ds Max and Maya," says Corrales. "So I had to push myself to learn and get involved with Blender in record time. One remarkable aspect is that the Blender Foundation built not only the software but also an entire workflow around it. With every new project, the Blender team tests and improves the workflow, and our production team took advantage of this support, building our own pipeline on top of it. And since all our artists are familiar with it, this allowed us to share tools and procedures."

San Luis Cine is an unexpected source for an animated feature. Its output over the seven years it has been in business has mostly consisted of television and advertising content. Also, it is located in the province of San Luis, some 11 hours' drive from the capital, Buenos Aires, putting it in a somewhat remote spot that can be difficult to lure creative talent to relocate to.

It's a move the directors, Alejandro Carlini and Marcos Valdivia, have made, along with Corrales, who originally hails from Costa Rica and says he is the production's sole foreigner.

Kiribati tells the tale of Yermo, a grumpy grandfather to a dysfunctional family who lives in a retirement home with maximum security. There, with his grandson, Luisito, and a hilarious group of his friends, he plans an escape that turns into an amazing journey to the island of Kiribati.

A Custom Workflow

Using Blender for a project like this requires a lot of customization, and Corrales says the production has been in constant contact with developers in Brazil, Europe and the United States to develop tools to facilitate the workflow.

An example of how Blender is designed with artists in mind is the way rigs work; instead of being several different objects, Blender has a special object-type called armature, which contains all needed bones, handlers and constraints; every armature has an action, which can be shared with other armatures and exported or imported in a consistent way. So even when the most complex character gets loaded into the scene, it consists of two objects: the mesh and the rig.

"Animation is difficult in Latin America because of the cost of licenses," says Corrales. "In Argentina, it's cheaper (to use Blender) than having to pay licenses for 30 to 40 people working on the production."

The film is about 80 percent completed with animation, using a crew of 12 to 16 animators. Corrales says most of the animators are in San Luis; about five work remotely from

Buenos Aires. The workflow was designed to allow the collaboration of artists working remotely from their homes, a challenging requirement for any production, says Corrales.

"It's really hard to get artists; lighting people are especially difficult to get," he says. "In Argentina, I can count (them all) on my hand. There are some in the capital, but they don't want to move to another place."

As a long-time V-Ray user, Corrales wanted to test V-Ray as the main render engine for the movie. Driven initially by curiosity, his communication with Chaos Group developer Andrei Izrantsev evolved into a useful solution for the *Kiribati* team. "It was a challenge switching from Blender's render engine to V-Ray, but with some effort and constant communication between V-Ray developer Andrei, myself and the technical director of our movie, we were able to adapt V-Ray to the movie's workflow."

Rendering with V-Ray also posed special technical challenges, with Corrales saying he spends a lot of time writing shaders, making custom tools and arranging panels in Blender to optimize workflow. A special tool was developed to manage rendering.

With a total of 1,300 shots in the film, Corrales says he expects to finish the animation within three months and move on to rendering, compositing and sound design.

The film is expected to be finished in 2016, with producers seeking a global release.

For Corrales, the experience has been a unique one that he thinks will show through in the final product. "This is a special movie," he says. ♦

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No Time for Tea Parties

Disney TV Animation's newest heroine is out to kick butt and make Earth a more magical place in *Star vs. The Forces of Evil*. By Mercedes Milligan.

Growing up isn't easy for your average adolescent. But tack on the duties of royalty, magical powers and being an exchange student in another dimension where – *hello?* – an evil villain keeps sending his army of monsters after you, and it's a recipe for disaster. Unless you're the cartoon star of Disney Channel's upcoming *Star vs. The Forces of Evil*. Then, it's a recipe for awesome sauce.

The show follows 14-year-old Star Butterfly, an energetic princess from the planet Mewni who is sent by her Royal Parents to live with the Diaz family on Earth to protect her powerful magic wand – which she still hasn't quite figured out. Their responsible son Marco shows Star the ropes, and Star shows him how to come out of his shell – sometimes with too much enthusiasm. Not only must Star fend off a power-hungry villain with a Napoleon complex, she must also learn how to stay out of trouble to avoid being sent to intergalactic reform school.

Star is created and executive produced



by CalArts grad Daron Nefcy, a Los Angeles native whose distinctively colorful cartoon-inspired art has been showcased throughout the area's underground art scene since she was a teen herself. The first-time series creator's credits include Disney XD's *Wander Over Yonder*, Warner Bros. Animation's *MAD* and Nickelodeon's *Robot and Monster*.

A Star Is Born

Nefcy pitched an early version of the con-

cept to Disney about four years ago. Initially, Star was an offbeat grade schooler whose magic was all in her head. "She was more like a crazy kid who thought she was Sailor Moon," Nefcy recalls. But right before her first meeting with SVP of Original Series Eric Coleman, she got her first taste of the joys of TV toon production when one of the execs suggested making Star a teenager with *real* magical powers.

"I thought, how am I going to make this work? Eric comes in like, so, what is this about ... I tried to pitch it like the same thing and it didn't make sense. I left thinking I completely messed it up!" says Nefcy. But after an intense week of rewriting, she emerged triumphant. "I developed the idea that she's a foreign exchange student from another dimension where she's a princess, she has an all-powerful magic wand, evil villains are after her. A lot of this stuff was in the original version but it's bigger now, richer. When I came back, they *really* liked it!"



Interdimensional exchange student Star kicks some monster butt during her time on Earth with schoolmate Marco Diaz.



Nefcy is stoked that contrary to the horror stories young creatives hear, she feels these changes and suggestions have truly made *Star* a stronger show. "When I came up with (the concept) in college, animation was different. I feel like you couldn't do so much really big, imaginative stuff then."

Creating an animated series has been Nefcy's dream since fourth grade, and her lifelong passion for vibrant cartoons, "magical girl" anime like *Sailor Moon* and underground comics comes through in *Star*. While Earth may be in a comparatively drab dimension, the vivacious characters inhabit a super colorful world that from moment to moment can explode with extraordinary creatures and magical mayhem from Star's wand.

One gets the impression that the sparkling 2D animation is what the '80s toons only dreamt they could be, but with wide-appeal humor in line with modern favorites like *Adventure Time* and *Gravity Falls*. Nefcy gives much of the credit to the great team of designers and art directors Disney has put together in L.A. Their combined visions are expertly brought

from board to frame by Canadian service studio Mercury Filmworks (*Wander Over Yonder*, *Mickey Mouse*) using Toon Boom's Harmony.

Working Some Magic

While getting *Star* on screen is a lifelong dream come true, no one would say it isn't hard work. The pilot phase alone took about a year, and producing the first 13-episode season another two. "The first season is so much just discovery and figuring out what the show is," says Nefcy. "It's definitely been really, really busy but I always feel like with these things you have to take it on like a marathon and not a sprint. ... You have to brace yourself, and take moments to have a life."

Nefcy believes the filmmaking experience she got at CalArts was crucial in preparing her for the challenges of helming her own show. She points out that on a student film, an animator is forced to take on every aspect of production – not just the fun stuff. She also learned a lot from her gig on *Wander Over Yonder*, learning on the job alongside veteran



creator Craig McCracken.

Since the show is meant to have a continuing arc (i.e., when someone accidentally gets turned into a troll, they better hope Star gets around to fixing them quickly), Nefcy admits one of the challenges has been to rein in all the awesomeness. "We're always thinking about where to take the show next, and sometimes we need to pull back a little. ... We have a show where characters are at school and at home and going to other dimensions, and stuff she's dealing with being a princess, and there's evil forces – somehow it all seems to mesh together."

Something that drew notice when the show was first announced is the fact that this is the first animated series for Disney TV created by a woman. But Nefcy considers herself to be just an edge on a rising trend, noting that the traditional animation "boys club" hasn't been an issue during her career. She also points out that the *Star* team is mostly female, many of them recent graduates.

"The thing I'm most proud of in the show is Star's character. She's unique and funny and she's a dork," Nefcy says. "She feels like a real girl to me. But she's not perfect. She makes mistakes, and can be kind of selfish, and I think that's all great! I hope she's a character people can relate to. Probably being a female show creator – how could it *not* help with that?"

Nefcy shares Star's effusive optimism when it comes to the TV animation landscape in general. She's excited to see that the networks are seeing the benefit of creator-driven content. "If anything, there's just so much going on right now that as a person trying to run a show, it's tough. You're trying to get the best people, and so is everybody else!" *Adventure Time*, *Rick and Morty*, *Wander Over Yonder* and *Gravity Falls* are some of her current favorites, and, she laments, she hasn't been watching as much anime as she used to.

Luckily, *Star vs. The Forces of Evil* seems to mix in all the things that Nefcy loves about graphic entertainment, and Disney is betting a lot of viewers will feel the same. "It's really fun, really unique and we've worked really hard making it," she says. "Hell, it's got monsters and dimension portals and princesses – something for everyone!"

***Star vs. The Forces of Evil* premieres in March on Disney XD.**



Jymn Magon: The Coolest Writer You've Never Heard Of?

If you're like me – freshly graduated and clawing a path for yourself in the tough, sometimes even cutthroat animation biz – you probably remember the magic of '90s Saturday morning cartoons (or, if you're a little older, the magic of mid-'80s Saturday morning cartoons). Little do you know that you can attribute many of those happy childhood sun-ups to this guy: Baboon Animation's own Emmy-winning Jymn Magon, who's now got as much a hand in shaping the classics of today as he did the '90s animation renaissance! Read on to see how Magon makes magic.

– Claire Stenger

Claire Stenger: *We owe Duck Tales for much of the animation renaissance that lead to higher quality children's television programming. How did you guys approach such an unprecedented project when there was nothing like it before?*

Jymn Magon: Yes, the entrance of Walt Disney TV Animation into the marketplace did raise the bar with *Gummi Bears* and *The Wuzzles* on network TV in 1985. Two years later, *Duck Tales* was given an initial order of 65 episodes, a massive undertaking for the young studio. Fortunately, comic-book genius Carl Barks had already created a mountain of Scrooge McDuck material (Duckburg, Scrooge's money bin, Beagle Boys, Gyro Gearloose, etc.). While I didn't develop the series, I was brought aboard to do three primetime "specials" – and my personal rule was to keep the scope and wonder of those Barks adventures that I had read as a kid.

Stenger: *TaleSpin* – where'd the bizarre decision to take *Jungle Book* characters and put them in an epic airplane adventure come from?

Magon: In 1998, writer Len Uhley and I were creating *B-Players* as the next WDTVA syndicated series. It was a *Roger Rabbit* clone that starred an unemployed Baloo. After that development was nixed, I hurriedly glued together an unused Launchpad McQuack idea (him as a freelance cargo pilot) with our *B-Players* leftover, Baloo. I ran it by Mark Zaslove, and after three days of brainstorming, we had a 1930s pulp-era adventure show about a cargo pilot and a sky-surfing kid. Upper management loved it. So you see, *TaleSpin* didn't spring from *Jungle Book* – it started with an out-of-work *B-Player* bear! Added later, Louie and Shere Khan simply seemed to be the perfect club owner and ruthless business-



man, respectively.



Jymn Magon

Stenger: *Why isn't Bagheera in TaleSpin?*

Magon: Look hard, and you'll see numerous Bagheera clones who pilot planes for Khan Industries.

Stenger: *How did the character of Max come about in A Goofy Movie? What do you think attributed to his popularity?*

Magon: When I was developing *Goof Troop* with producer Bob Taylor, we gave Goofy a son – but no wife (the single parent angle was not only timely, it also made Goofy sympathetic). Son Max was the embodiment of every kid's horror at being embarrassed by his parents. That relatable dynamic only got stronger when we aged Max up for *A Goofy Movie*.

Stenger: *You wrote A Goofy Movie. It was unique because it felt so real! No fantasy, not a lot of cartoon physics – almost live action in nature. How was the decision made to place the outlandish Goofy in such a realistic setting?*

Magon: Goofy has always lived in a "realistic" world, yet his goofiness allows him to bend the laws of physics. Many of Goofy's cartoon shorts dealt with everyday activities – driving, skiing,

bodybuilding, horseback riding, etc. – but done in a wacky way. *A Goofy Movie* follows that same format.

Stenger: *A Goofy Movie became an emotionally complex look at fatherhood – more so than many other Disney movies. How did you accomplish this depth? Did you have to fight for it?*

Magon: No, we never had to fight for that emotional arc. From the outset, Jeffrey Katzenberg wanted a strained father-child relationship that gets cured on a road trip. As a father, I knew that the human cycle of growing up, leaving home, having children and then watching it all start again was deeply rooted in the human psyche.

Stenger: *How did Gummi Bears, starring characters based on candies, turn into a fantastical medieval adventure?*

Magon: In 1984, new CEO Michael Eisner mentioned to the fledgling TV Animation Department that his kids liked a new candy called Gummi Bears. The name intrigued him, and he told me, "Make a show about that." It seemed daft at the time – main characters that get eaten – but we fought past the candy motif and started exploring the world of European fairy tales. Freshly-hired producer Art Vitello and I took many, many "story walks" and eventually hammered out the medieval kingdom of Dunwyn. Thanks to our exceptional art staff, WDTVA soon had a rich, magical world that felt very Disneyesque – and not candy-like at all! ♦

Baboon Animation is a U.S.-based collective of Oscar-nominated, multi-Emy winning animation writers with credits on dozens of the most iconic animated shows worldwide.

87th Academy Awards Nominees

Big studio CG offerings are outnumbered by 2D and stop-motion indies in this year's controversial faceoff for moviedom's biggest prize.

The first round is in the books and the final nominations have been announced for this year's Oscars – and not without controversy.

By far the biggest outcry was the Academy's decision to pass over *The LEGO Movie* as a nominee for Best Animated Feature. And the academy threw another surprise into this category, nominating traditionally animated independent films – *Song of the Sea* and *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya* – over the likes of *The Book of Life*.

Both *The LEGO Movie* and *The Book of Life* racked up plenty of honors in the run-up to the Oscars, making the indie choices even more surprising. *The LEGO Movie* has six Annie Award nominations, a BAFTA Award nomination, a Critics Choice Award, a Golden Globes nomination, and year's best honors

from the likes of the National Board of Review and the New York Film Critics Circle Awards. It's also one of the best-reviewed films of the year, making its omission the most puzzling part of this year's slate.

Following the admittedly fuzzy logic of awards pedigree, *The LEGO Movie* was going into the Oscars nominations outpacing *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya* and *The Book of Life* – both with plenty of honors of their own but fewer than *LEGO* – and way ahead of *Song of the Sea*, which was released so late in the year it has had less of a chance to rack up awards.

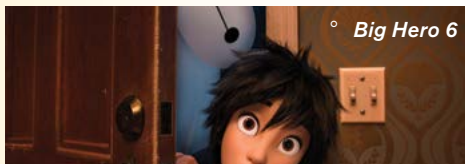
The Animated Short Film category had its fair share of surprises, too, with the popular and innovative *Duet* failing to make the cut, as did such well-received favorites as *The Numberlys*, from previous winners at Moon-

bot Studios, and the perennially overlooked Bill Plympton's *Footprints*.

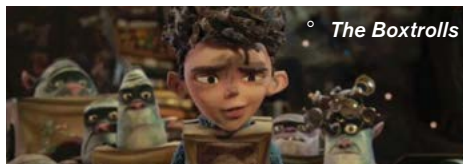
The visual-effects category this year looks like it will finally be time for a movie based on a Marvel comic book to take home an Oscar, with three of the five nominations going to such movies.

The most obvious omission is *The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies*, the previous two installments of which were each nominated in this category. Taking the sting out of that for Weta Digital is its nomination for *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*, seen by many as the film to beat.

At least this year there's one category all animation fans can rally behind: Best Original Song. The tune "Everything Is Awesome" offers *The LEGO Movie* its one big chance to take home some hardware. ♦



◦ *Big Hero 6*



◦ *The Boxtrolls*



◦ *How to Train Your Dragon 2*



◦ *Song of the Sea*



◦ *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya*

Best animated feature film of the year

- **Big Hero 6.** Don Hall, Chris Williams and Roy Conli
- **The Boxtrolls.** Anthony Stacchi, Graham Annable and Travis Knight
- **How to Train Your Dragon 2.** Dean DeBlois and Bonnie Arnold
- **Song of the Sea.** Tomm Moore and Paul Young
- **The Tale of the Princess Kaguya.** Isao Takahata and Yoshiaki Nishimura

Best animated short film

- **The Bigger Picture.** Daisy Jacobs and Christopher Hees
- **The Dam Keeper.** Robert Kondo and Dice Tsutsumi
- **Feast.** Patrick Osborne and Kristina Reed
- **Me and My Moulton.** Torill Kove
- **A Single Life.** Joris Oprins

Achievement in visual effects

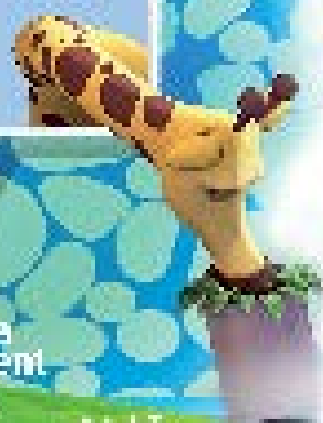
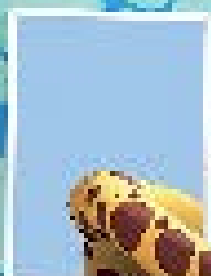
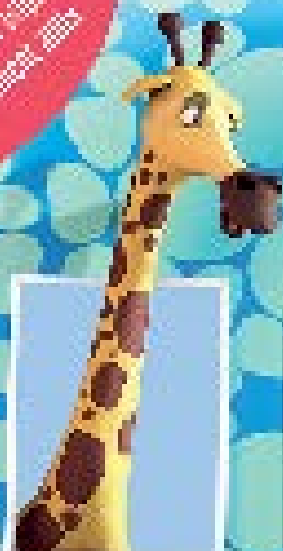
- **Captain America: The Winter Soldier.** Dan DeLeeuw, Russell Earl, Bryan Grill and Dan Sudick

- **Dawn of the Planet of the Apes.** Joe Letteri, Dan Lemmon, Daniel Barrett and Erik Winquist
- **Guardians of the Galaxy.** Stephane Ceretti, Nicolas Aithadi, Jonathan Fawkner and Paul Corbould
- **Interstellar.** Paul Franklin, Andrew Lockley, Ian Hunter and Scott Fisher
- **X-Men: Days of Future Past.** Richard Stammers, Lou Pecora, Tim Crosbie and Cameron Waldbauer

Achievement in music written for motion pictures (Original song)

- **"Everything Is Awesome."** from *The LEGO Movie*. Music and Lyric by Shawn Patterson
- **"Glory"** from *Selma*. Music and Lyric by John Stephens and Lonnie Lynn
- **"Grateful"** from *Beyond the Lights*. Music and Lyric by Diane Warren
- **"I'm Not Gonna Miss You"** from *Glen Campbell...I'll Be Me*. Music and Lyric by Glen Campbell and Julian Raymond
- **"Lost Stars"** from *Begin Again*. Music and Lyric by Gregg Alexander and Danielle Brisebois

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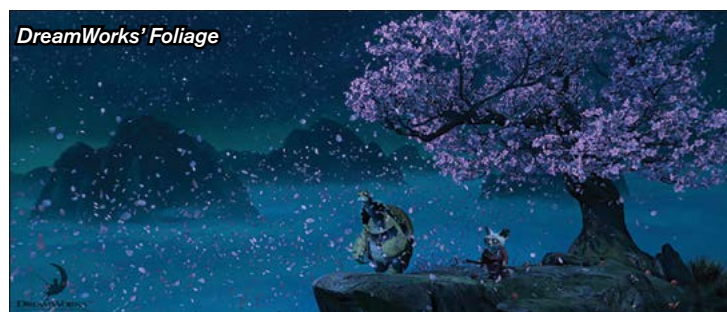
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Sci-Tech Awards Track the State of Digital Arts

The Academy takes the long view in tracing the most important tech of today back to its key moment of creation. By Ellen Wolff.

This year, the Motion Picture Academy's 21 Scientific and Technical Achievement Awards included innovators from Dolby, Sony, HP, Tiffen and Texas Instruments. But the software prizes especially reveal how digital technology has had an impact on animation and visual effects.

Especially striking is the lengthy evolution behind many computer tools the Academy is honoring in 2015. ILM's Shape Sculpting System has been used for a decade, and DreamWorks' Foliage System is 15 years old. "It takes years to sort this out," says Sci-Tech Committee member Richard Edlund, who also heads the Academy's VFX Branch. "We want to honor technology that 'sticks to the ribs.'"

The Academy's due diligence involves tracing today's techniques back to the fundamental research that inspired them. That produced this year's award to Robert Bridson, whose research in volumetric sculpting – begun in 2002 – influenced current fluid simulation tools. Bridson, who co-created the Naiad software used to generate water in *Life of Pi*, has consulted at Weta Digital and Double Negative, and is now at Autodesk. Reflecting on how "directable" simulation has evolved in films, Bridson says: "It had to be directable, because lots of simulation wasn't great. It took many tweaks to get something that looked natural. I hope we're entering the era

where things will look natural right from the start."

Notably, Bridson previously worked with Stanford University scientist Ron Fedkiw on ILM's PhysBAM Destruction System, another honoree this year. As is often the case, the Academy recognizes several software approaches that tackle similar problems. So awards are also going to the "digital destruction" developers behind the Bullet physics engine, as well as the Kali Destruction System and the Digital Molecular Matter toolkit.

As moviemakers simulate naturalistic phenomena with increasing regularity, the Academy is honoring several systems that convincingly mimic reality. Weta Digital was recognized for its Barbershop hair grooming (on dazzling display in the *Planet of the Apes* films), and two software systems for generating digital vegetation also earned awards. One is SpeedTree Cinema, a "budget-friendly" tool, along with DreamWorks' proprietary Foliage System. DreamWorks' lead honoree, Scott Peterson, traces the studio's efforts back to *Shrek*, when modeling trees was painstakingly labor-intensive. "Now that so much is possible, we're focusing on how to do it faster or more efficiently."

Their current system allows animators to readily manipulate thousands of trees, notes Jeff Budsberg, another DreamWorks honoree. "Artists have direct access to these tools, and can hit any

art direction they want. It's not enough to build a realistic tree. Directors may want a whimsical tree or an angry tree."

Striking a balance between efficiency and creative control is essential, since studios face the twin demands of artistic ambitions and budget constraints. So it's not surprising that computers are being harnessed to capture complex human movements that assist the creation of animated characters, and the Academy has honored mocap technology. This year's focus was on facial animation capture, spotlighting the MOVA system used by Digital Domain for *Benjamin Button* and other films. And the Academy – recognizing precedent once again – also honored the pioneers behind *The Matrix*, and the Universal Capture approach by ESC Entertainment.

If any single award this year reflects the long view the Academy takes towards the evolution of digital tools, it's the one for ILM's Shape Sculpting System. Lead honoree Cary Phillips, who received a 1998 award for Caricature software and shared a 2001 prize for ILM's Creature Dynamics System, has seen the evolution first-hand. "ILM's tradition goes back to pre-computer model shops. Our system allows sculptors to be front-and-center in determining how skin moves." Voicing a perspective shared by several of this year's winners, Phillips says, "It's not about technology, but what we empower artists to do." ♦



Richard Edlund



Robert Bridson



Scott Peterson



Jeff Budsberg

13th Annual VES Awards Nominees

The year's best in effects and animation work will be celebrated with awards presented in 23 categories in a ceremony set for Feb. 4.

Few awards get into the nitty-gritty of animation and visual effects work like the VES Awards.

Now in its 13th year, this year's nominees were announced Jan. 13. Members of the Visual Effects Society viewed and voted online for the winners from Jan. 23-30, with the winners to be announced in a gala black-tie dinner Feb. 4 at the Beverly Hills Hotel.

J.J. Abrams will receive the Visionary Award. Plans to present the

Lifetime Achievement Award to Ridley Scott were postponed to a future date due to the filmmaker's inability to attend the awards due to his production schedule.

Ticket information can be found online at <http://www.visualeffectssociety.com/ves-awards>.

And don't forget to read about the winners online at www.animationmagazine.net. Best of luck to all the nominees!

Outstanding Visual Effects in a Visual Effects-Driven Photoreal/Live Action Feature Motion Picture

- **Dawn of the Planet of the Apes.** Joe Letteri, Ryan Stafford, Matt Kutcher, Dan Lemmon, Hannah Blanchini.
- **Guardians of the Galaxy.** Stephane Ceretti, Susan Pickett, Jonathan Fawcner, Nicolas Aithadi, Paul Corbould.
- **Interstellar.** Paul Franklin, Kevin Elam, Ann Podlozny, Andrew Lockley, Scott Fisher.
- **Maleficent.** Carey Villegas, Barrie Hemsley, Adam Valdez, Kelly Port, Michael Dawson.
- **The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies.** Joe Letteri, David Conley, Eric Saindon, Kevin Sherwood, Steve Ingram.
- **X-Men: Days of Future Past.** Richard Stammers, Blondel Aidoo, Lou Pecora, Anders Langlands, Cameron Waldbauer.

Outstanding Supporting Visual Effects in a Photoreal/Live Action Feature Motion Picture

- **Birdman (or The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance).** Ara Khanikian, Ivy Agregan, Sebastien Moreau, Isabelle Langlois.
- **Divergent.** Jim Berney, Greg Baxter, Matt Dessero.
- **The Grand Budapest Hotel.** Gabriel Sanchez, Jenny Foster, Simon Weisse, Jan Burda.
- **The Imitation Game.** Stuart Bullen, Lucy Ainsworth-Taylor, Simon Rowe.
- **Unbroken.** Bill George, Steve Gaub, Erin Dusseault, Dave Morley, Brian Cox.

Outstanding Animation in an Animated Feature Motion Picture

- **Big Hero 6.** Don Hall, Chris Williams, Roy Conli, Zach Parrish.
- **How to Train Your Dragon 2.** Bonnie Arnold, Dean DeBlois, Dave Walvoord,



Big Hero 6

Simon Otto.

- **Rio 2.** Carlos Saldanha, Bruce Anderson, John C. Donkin, Kirk Garfield.
- **The Boxtrolls.** Travis Knight, Anthony Stacchi, Graham Annable, Brad Schiff.
- **The LEGO Movie.** Chris McKay, Amber Naismith, Jim Dodd, David Williams.

Outstanding Visual Effects in a Visual Effects-Driven Photoreal/Live Action Broadcast Program

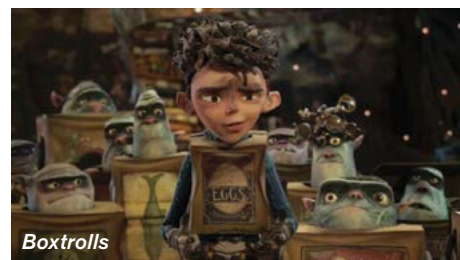
- **Constantine, "A Feast of Friends"** Kevin Blank, Elizabeth Castro, Yafei Wu, Chris LeDoux.
- **Game of Thrones, "The Children."** Joe Bauer, Steve Kullback, Stuart Brisdon, Thomas Schelesny, Sven Martin.
- **Hemlock Grove.** Matt Whelan, Chris Brown, Todd Masters, Johnathan Banta, Eric McAvoy.
- **Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.** Mark Kolpack, Sabrina Arnold, Gary D'Amico, Kevin Lingenfelder, David Beedon.
- **The Flash.** Armen Kevorkian, James Baldanzi, Jeremy Jozwick, Andranik Taranyan.

Outstanding Supporting Visual Effects in a Visual Effects-Driven Photoreal/Live Action Broadcast Program

- **American Horror Story: Freak Show, "Edward Mordrake, Part 2."** Jason Piccioni, Jason Spratt, Mike Kirylo, Justin Ball, Eric Roberts.
- **Black Sails, "Episode 1."** Erik Henry, Annemarie Griggs, Paul Graff, George

Murphy.

- **Crossbones.** Kevin Blank, Ron Pogue, Andy Weder, Niklas Jacobson, Mans Bjorklund.
- **Penny Dreadful, "Séance."** James Cooper, Bill Halliday, Sarah McMurdo, Lorne Kwechansky.
- **Ripper Street, "Whitechapel Terminus."** Ed Bruce, Alan Collins, Joe Curtis, John O'Connell.



Boxtrolls

Outstanding Real-Time Visuals in a Video Game

- **Alien: Isolation.** Jude Bond, Al Hope, Howard Rayner, Oriol Sans Gomez.
- **Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare.** Yi-chao Sandy Lin-Chiang, Joseph Salud, Demetrius Leal, Dave Blizard.
- **inFAMOUS: Second Son.** Matt Vainio, Horia Docu, Jason Connell, Bill Rockenbeck.
- **Sunset Overdrive.** Jacinda Chew, Bryan Intihar, Grant Hollis.

Outstanding Visual Effects in a Commercial

- **Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare, "Discover Your Power."** Paul O'Shea, Michael Wigart, Andy Boyd, Jacob Montgomery, Benoit Mannequin.
- **Destiny, "Become Legend."** Eric Barba, Carla Attanasio, Greg Teegarden, Dan Akers.
- **ESA, "Ambition."** Jakub Knapik, Tomasz Wachnik, Lukasz Sobisz, Michal Skrzypiec.
- **General Electric, "Childlike**

- Imagination.** Benjamin Walsh, Jennie Burnett, Brian Burke, Dominik Bauch.
- **SSE, "Maya."** Neil Davies, Alex Hammond, Jorge Montiel, Beth Vander.

Outstanding Visual Effects in a Special Venue Project

- **Hubei in the Air.** Andrew Roberts, Claudia Lachnitt, Yas Takata, Boris Schmidt, Sebastian Butenberg.
- **Ratatouille: L'Aventure Totalement Torquee de Remy.** Tony Apodaca, Marianne McLean, Gilles Martin, Edwin Chang, Mark Mine.
- **Star Journey.** Adam Watkins, Viktorija Ogureckaja, Thilo Ewers, Omid Arzhang, Yas Takata.
- **The Hogwarts Express.** Chris Shaw, Rich Yeomans, Steven Godfrey, Peter Jopling, John Richardson.
- **The Lost Temple.** John Hughes, Walt Jones, Brent Young, Michael Smith.

Outstanding Performance of an Animated Character in a Photoreal/Live Action Feature Motion Picture

- **Dawn of the Planet of the Apes, "Caesar."** Paul Story, Eteuati Tema, Andrea Merlo, Emiliano Padovani.
- **Dawn of the Planet of the Apes, "Koba."** Daniel Barrett, Alessandro Bonora, Mark Edward Allen, Masaya Suzuki.
- **Guardians of the Galaxy, "Rocket."** Kevin Spruce, Rachel Williams, Laurie Brugger, Mark Wilson.
- **Maleficent, "Thistlewit."** Darren Hendler, Matthias Wittmann, Jeremy Buttell, Elliot Rosenstein.

Outstanding Animated Character in an Animated Feature Motion Picture

- **Big Hero 6, "Baymax."** Colin Eckart, John Kahwaty, Zach Parrish, Zack Petroc.
- **How to Train Your Dragon 2, "Hiccup."** Jakob Hjort Jensen, Fabio Lignini, Stephen Candell, Hongseo Park.
- **Rio 2, "Gabi."** Jason Sadler, Ignacio Barrios, Drew Winey, Diana Diriwaechter.
- **The Boxtrolls, "Archibald Snatcher."** Travis Knight, Jason Stalman, Michael Laubach, Kyle Williams.



The Hobbit 3

Outstanding Performance of an Animated Character in a Commercial, Broadcast Program, or Video Game

- **Freesat Freetime, "Sheldon."** Russell Dodgson, Grant Walker, Juan Sebastian Nino, Amar Chundavadra.
- **Game of Thrones, "Drogon."** Philip Meyer, Thomas Kutschera, Igor Majdandzic, Mark Spindler.
- **John Lewis, "Monty the Penguin."** Diarmid Harrison Murray, Tim Van Hussen, Amir Bazazi, Georgios Kyprisous.
- **SSE, "Maya."** Jorge Montiel, Alex Hammond, Daniel Kmet, Philippe Moine.



Captain America 2

Outstanding Created Environment in a Photoreal/Live Action Feature Motion Picture

- **Captain America: The Winter Soldier, "Triskelion Headquarters."** Johan Thorngren, Greg Kegel, Quentin Marmier, Luis Calero.
- **Interstellar, "Tesseract."** Tom Bracht, Graham Page, Thomas Döhlen, Kirsty Clark.
- **Lucy, "Times Square."** Richard Bluff, Steve Bevins, Steve DeLuca, Tiffany Yung.
- **Noah, "Antediluvian Earth."** Grady Cofer, Dan Wheaton, Susumu Yukuhiro, Ben O'Brien.

Outstanding Created Environment in an Animated Feature Motion Picture

- **Big Hero 6, "Into the Portal."** Ralf Habel, David Hutchins, Michael Kaschalk, Olun Riley.
- **How to Train Your Dragon 2, "Oasis."** Sun Yoon, Liang-Yuan Wang, Ted Davis, Shannon Thomas.
- **The Book of Life, "Magical Land of the Remembered."** Glo Minaya, Amy Chen, Sean McEwan, Jeff Masters.
- **The Boxtrolls, "Boxtroll Cavern."** Curt Enderle, Rob DeSue, Emily Greene, Jesse Gregg.

Outstanding Created Environment in a Commercial, Broadcast Program, or Video Game

- **Coca-Cola, "Snowy Forest."** Tom Bardwell, Kevin Ives, Kyle Cody, Jimmy Gass.

- **Game of Thrones, "Braavos Establisher."** Rene Borst, Christian Zilliken, Jan Burda, Steffen Metzner.
- **Penny Dreadful, "Séance."** Mathew Borrett, Lorne Kwechansky, Graham Day, Jason Gougeon.
- **War Thunder, "Battlefield."** Andrey Bogdanov, Mikhail Daticik, Dmitriy Ovcharenko, Ekaterina Bogdanova.

Outstanding Virtual Cinematography in a Photoreal/Live Action Motion Media Project

- **Dawn of the Planet of the Apes.** Keith Miller, Jonathan Paquin, Alessandro Saponi, David Houghton Williams.
- **Edge of Tomorrow, "Beach and Paris Attacks."** Albert Cheng, Jose Enrique Astacio Jr., Michael Havart, Dion Beebe.
- **Interstellar, "Tesseract."** Faraz Hameed, Stephen Painter, Hoyte van Hoytema, Dorian Knapp.
- **X-Men: Days of Future Past, "Kitchen Scene."** Austin Bonang, Casey Schatz, Dennis Jones, Newton Thomas Sigel.

Outstanding Models in any Motion Media Project

- **Big Hero 6, "City of San Fransokyo."** Brett Achorn, Minh Duong, Scott Watanabe, Larry Wu.
- **The Boxtrolls, "Mecha-Drill."** Tom McClure, Oliver Jones, Raul Martinez.
- **The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies, "Laketown."** Leslie Chan, Alastair Mayer, Niklas Preston, Justin Stockton.
- **Transformers: Age of Extinction, "Knightship."** Landis Fields, John Goodson, Anthony Rispoli, Dae Han.

Outstanding Effects Simulations in a Photoreal/Live Action Feature Motion Picture

- **Captain America: The Winter Soldier, "Helicarrier Broadside and Crash."** Dan Pearson, Sheldon Serrao, Jose Burgos, Eric Jennings.
- **Edge of Tomorrow, "Destruction and Sand."** Steve Avoujageli, Pawel Grochola, Atsushi Ikarashi, Paul Waggoner.
- **The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies.** Jon Allitt, David Caeiro, Ronnie Menahem.
- **X-Men: Days of Future Past, "Quicksilver Pentagon Kitchen."** Adam Paschke, Premamurti Paetsch, Sam Hancock, Timmy Lundin.

Outstanding Effects Simulations in an Animated Feature Motion Picture

- **Big Hero 6.** Henrik Falt, David Hutchins, Michael Kaschalk, John Kosnik.
- **How to Train Your Dragon 2, "The Battle."** Spencer Knapp, Baptiste Van Opstal, Lucas Janin, Jason Mayer.
- **The Boxtrolls.** Kent Estep, Peter Stuart, Ralph Procida, Timur Khodzhaev.
- **The LEGO Movie.** Carsten Kolve, Jayandera Danappal, Matt Ebb, Miles Green.

Outstanding Effects Simulations in a Commercial, Broadcast Program, or Video Game

- **Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey.** Dominique Vidal, Isabelle Perin-Leduc, Sandrine Lurde, Alexandre Lerouge.
- **DirecTV, "Landing."** Jeffrey Dates, Jimmy Gass, Iwan Zwarts, Ryan Coster.
- **SSE, "Maya."** Alex Hammond, Peter Agg, Sam Driscoll, Jimmy Gass.
- **Vikings, "Invasion Storm Sequence."** Jeremy Dineen, Eric Lacroix, Kyle Yoneda, Norman Ran.

Outstanding Compositing in a Photoreal/Live Action Feature Motion Picture

- **Dawn of the Planet of the Apes.** Christoph Salzmann, Florian Schroeder,



Planet of the Apes

- Quentin Hema, Simone Riginelli.
- **Edge of Tomorrow, "Beach."** Craig Wentworth, Matthew Welford, Marie Victoria Denoga, Frank Fieser.
- **Interstellar, "Water."** Raphael Hamm, Isaac Layish, Sebastian Von Overheid, Tristan Myles.
- **The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies.** Simon Jung, Ben Roberts, Matthew Adams, Jordan Schilling.

Outstanding Compositing in a Photoreal/Live Action Broadcast Program

- **American Horror Story: Freak Show, "Edward Mordrake, Part 2."** Tommy Tran, JV Pike, Rob Lutz, Matt Lefferts.
- **Game of Thrones, "Wight Attack."** Keegan Douglas, Okan Ataman, Brian Fortune, David Lopez.
- **Game of Thrones, "The Watchers on the Wall."** Dan Breckwoldt, Martin Furman, Sophie Marfleet, Eric Andrusyszyn.

- **The Knick, "Abigail's Nose."** Vance Miller, Aaron Raff, John Bair, Rebecca Dunn.
- **Vikings, "Invasion."** Ovidiu Cinazan, Gary Couto, Doug Cook, Angel Li.

Outstanding Compositing in a Photoreal/Live Action Commercial

- **Destiny, "Become Legend."** Dan Akers, Nitant Karnik, Matt Smith, Kym Olsen.
- **Kia The Truth.** Paul Lambert, Dan Akers, Carlos Morales, Holly Horter.
- **Nike Hypervenom, "Mirrors ft. Neymar Jr."** Dan Williams, Daniel Morris, Ilia Mokhtareizadeh, Greg Spencer.
- **SSE.** Neil Davies, Leonardo Costa, Gianluca DiMarco.

Outstanding Visual Effects in a Student Project

- **Deep Dance.** Marco Erbrich, Christoph Westphal, Vincent Langer.
- **Dragon Clan.** Yahui Fan, Sheng Xu.
- **Murphy.** Bruno LeVeque, Xavier Lafarge.
- **Wrapped.** Roman Kaelin, Falko Paepfer, Florian Wittmann, Paolo Tamburrino.

Visionary Award

- **J.J. Abrams**

The Breakdown

Five Nominations

- Big Hero 6
- The Boxtrolls
- Dawn of the Planet of the Apes
- Game of Thrones

Four Nominations

- How to Train Your Dragon 2
- Interstellar
- The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies
- SSE: Maya

Three Nominations

- Edge of Tomorrow
- X-Men: Days of Future Past

Two Nominations

- American Horror Story: Freak Show
- Captain America: The Winter Soldier
- Destiny, "Become Legend"
- Guardians of the Galaxy
- The LEGO Movie

- Maleficent
- Penny Dreadful
- Rio 2
- Vikings

One Nomination

- Birdman (or the Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)
- Black Sails
- Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare
- Coca-Cola, "Snowy Forest"
- Constantine
- Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey
- Deep Dance
- DirecTV, "Landing"
- Divergent
- Dragon Clan
- ESA, "Ambition"
- The Flash
- Freesat Freetime
- General Electric, "Childlike Imagination"
- The Grand Budapest Hotel

- Hemlock Grove
- The Hogwarts Express
- Hubei in the Air
- The Imitation Game
- inFAMOUS: Second Son
- John Lewis
- Kia The Truth
- The Knick
- The Lost Temple
- Lucy
- Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.
- Murphy
- Nike Hypervenom, "Mirrors ft. Neymar Jr."
- Noah
- Ratatouille: L'Aventure Totalement Torquee de Remy
- Star Journey
- Sunset Overdrive
- Transformers: Age of Extinction
- Unbroken
- War Thunder, "Battlefield"
- Wrapped

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The Essential Guide to Cartoon Movie

Pitching event to present 60 projects in various stages of completion seeking the right deal to reach the next level.

The growth of animation in Europe is clear in the lineup for the 17th Cartoon Movie, which saw a 40 percent increase in submissions from the previous edition.

The final lineup for the financing and production pitching event – set for March 4-6 in Lyon, France – features 60 projects from 17 European countries.

Of those entries, 21 of them are concepts, 21 are in development, 10 are in production and eight are completed films.

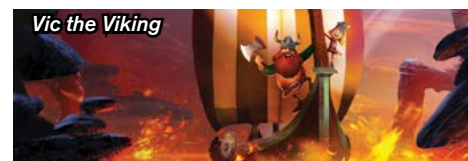
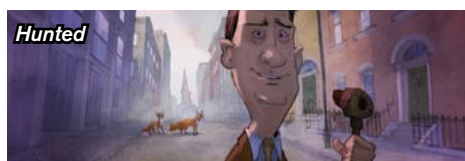
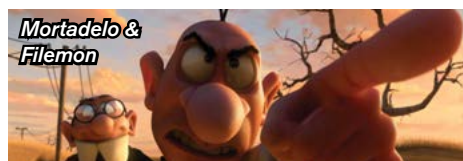
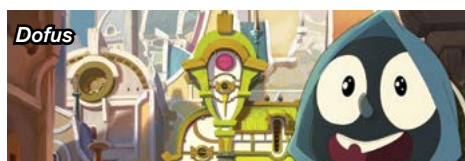
France dominates the selection with 25 projects, followed by Germany with nine, the United Kingdom with four and Belgium, Italy and Ireland with two each.

Nordic countries combined have 10

projects, with nations in Eastern Europe such as Poland and the Czech Republic increasingly represented.

More than 700 animation film professionals are expected to attend the event.

With so many projects and so little time, here's *Animation Magazine's* essential guide to the must-see projects in this year's event.



COMPLETED FILMS

Moomins on the Riviera

Producers: Handle Productions (Finland) and Pictak (France)

Director: Xavier Picard

Type of animation: 2D

Target audience: Family

Running time: 80 mins.

Based on the beloved Tove Jansson comic strips, this new Moomins film sees the family vacationing on the Riviera and becoming bedazzled by its glitz and glamour. With a charming trailer, it's hard to imagine the Moomins' many fans not being enamored of this new movie.

Mortadelo & Filemon – Mission: Implausible

Producers: Zeta Cinema (Spain)

Director: Javier Fesser

Type of animation: 3D

Target audience: Family

Running time: 91 mins.

A pair of superspies poke fun at the genre using elaborate disguises and inventions that rarely, if ever, work. This updated version of the popular and long-running Spanish comic series – previously adapted in live-action and animation for both TV and feature films – looks like a smart comedy hit.

Yellowbird

Producers: TeamTo and Haut et Court (France)

Director: Christian De Vita

Type of animation: 3D

Target audience: Family

Running time: 90 mins.

A charming and fun tale of an orphaned bird so desperate to find a family that he volunteers to lead a migration to Africa despite having no clue what he's doing. The animation mixes old-school techniques with CG animation for a fresh look that stands out from the herd.

CONCEPTS

Hunted

Producers: Monster Entertainment, PillarStone Productions (Ireland)

Director: Paul Bolger

Type of animation: 2D and 3D

Target audience: Family

An exciting tale of a city fox that wants to show his son his country home – only for both to be caught up in a foxhunt that builds to an exciting climax.

L’Affaire Furcy

Producers: Tiktak Productions (France)

Director: Serge Elissalde

Type of animation: 2D

Target audience: Family

With a style evoking a painting, this tells the true story of a slave in 1817 America who successfully brings a complaint to court demanding his freedom from his master.

The Radio

Producers: Amelio Ortiz & Navarrette (Germany)

Directors: Cuini Amelio Ortiz and Carolina Cruz

Type of animation: 2D and stop-motion

Target audience: Young adults and adults

A look at life in Chile under the rule of Gen. Pinochet, this film tells four stories from the perspectives of children and teens whose lives were united by the sound of the radio.

The Summit of the Gods

Producers: Julianne Films (France), Walking the Dog (Belgium), Melusine Productions (Luxembourg)

Directors: Eric Valli and Jean-Christophe Roger

Type of animation: 3D

Target audience: Family

A young reporter finds a camera that may have belonged to George Mallory on his fatal attempt to climb Mount Everest in 1924. But its theft thrusts him into the competitive world of climbers and climbing, leading the reporter back to the scene of the climb.

Vincent

Producers: Submarine (The Netherlands), Walking the Dog (Belgium), Avros Tros (The Netherlands)

Type of animation: 2D

Target audience: Young adults and adults

Based on Barbara Stok's graphic novel, the film tells the life story of artist Vincent van Gogh emulating Stok's visual style and coloring the animation like the famed artist did his paintings.

IN DEVELOPMENT

The Jungle Bunch

Producer: TAT Productions (France)

Director: David Alaux

Type of animation: 3D

Target audience: Family

Protectors of the jungle Maurice the tiger and the Jungle Bunch face their biggest challenge yet when Igor the koala launches a plan to annihilate the jungle. The bunch has to team up with mythical defenders known as the Champions to unlock the secret that can stop Igor.

Vic the Viking: The Movie

Producer: Studio 100 Animation (France), Studio 100 Media (Germany)

Director: Eric Cazes

Type of animation: 3D, stereoscopic

Target audience: Family

The popular TV series comes to the big screen, as Vic joins his father, Halvar, on a dangerous journey to the forges of Loki to save Vic's mother.

IN PRODUCTION

Dofus – Book 1

Producers: Ankama Animations, France 3 Cinema (France)

Director: Anthony Roux, Jean-Jacques Denis

Type of animation: 2D

Target audience: Family

The French MMORPG comes to the big screen, as 10-year-old Joris has to save the magic city of Bonta from the vengeful witch Julith.

Young Perez

Producers: Explicit Films (France) and Nadasdy Film (Switzerland)

Directors: Jean-Jacques Kahn and Franck Van Leeuwen

Type of animation: 2D and 3D

Target audience: Young adults and adults

A woman in Tunis named Monette awaits the return of Victor Young Perez, world boxing champion in 1931. She goes in search of him and learns of his fall from a life of glory and passion to a career in decline and his deportation to and death at Auschwitz in World War II. ♦

Dream Shot

**Creator Terrell White's love of art and basketball come together in the online animated series *City of Hoops*.
By Tom McLean.**

Terrell White has two passions: basketball and art. Love of the former lead the Lancaster, Calif. native to play at the college level for Utah State University Eastern and for a stint overseas. Art was a major influence from early on for White, who found special inspiration when a high school teacher suggested he enter an original art contest – and he won the grand prize.

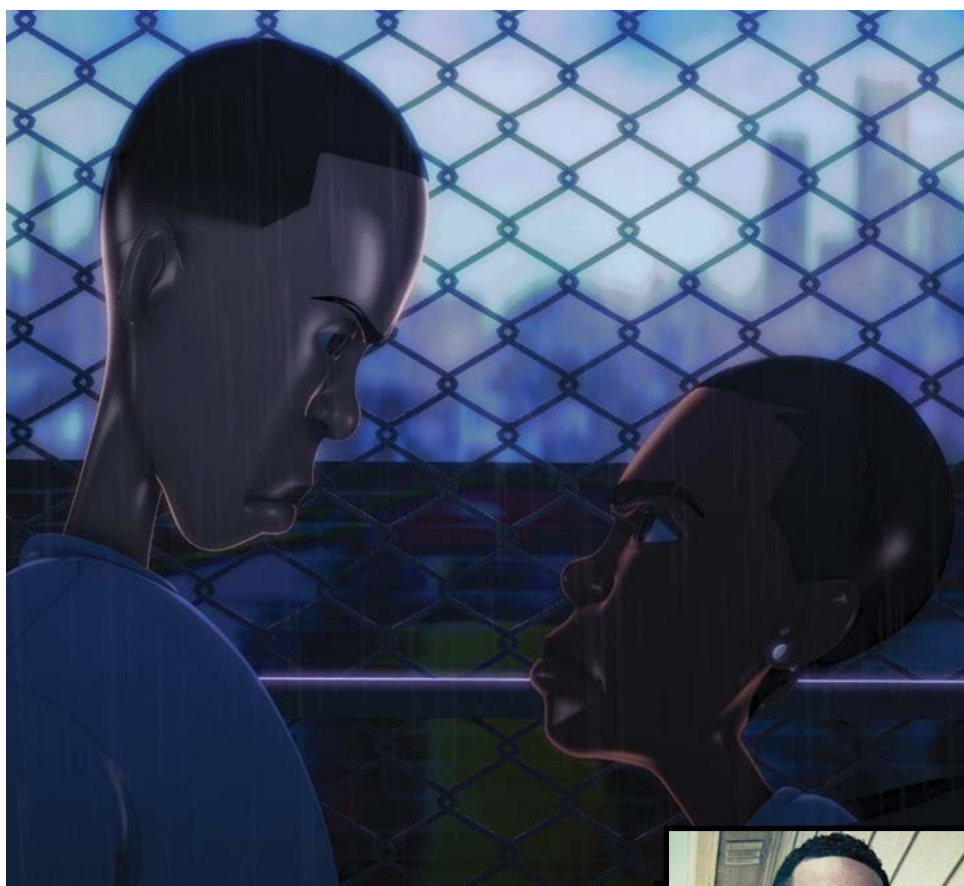
That moment led directly to White creating *City of Hoops*, a series of animated basketball shorts with a message. “Only the Beginning,” the first installment in the series debuted in December on YouTube and has earned praise from basketball-oriented *Slam Magazine* and racked up nearly 4,000 views.

The short introduces the main characters, T and O, young basketball players and best friends whose epic battle on the neighborhood court draws attention from a menacing observer.

“What I really want people to know about *City of Hoops* is our social mission is to empower, educate and engage the youth through animation and using basketball as a springboard to actually get that message across,” says White. “When people hear *City of Hoops*, they just automatically think that this is just a basketball cartoon, but it’s definitely more than that. It’s about the game of life told through a young superstar and his friends and their journey to try and make it.”

Produced independently at White’s Relly Rell Studios in association with Puppeteer Studios, the short has earned a good response since going live. “We have a lot of interest ... from NBA athletes, their agents, multiplatform journals,” says White. “This is the first time we actually produced something that has a lot of action and showed the quality of the animation.”

The second short, “Knowledge Is Power,” is on track for an early February release – and that’s just the tip of the iceberg. White says



the plan is to release five shorts this year. And he hopes to get the concept to series, having already scripted out 48 episodes.

“The whole message of this cartoon is about pursuing dreams and that if you believe in yourself anything is possible,” says White. He plans drama and comedy – the third short is a send-up of slam-dunk contests, titled “Pump up the Value” – rounding out the series’ appeal.

Getting a Kickstart

White says his producing partner, Matthew Allison, is responsible for kick-starting work on the series after they met about seven years ago. “That’s where everything started to bloom and get going,” he says.

White says he has four full-time animators, including lead animator Aurthur Mercader, working on the project using tools like Autodesk Maya, with each short taking about two months to complete.

One of the key animation elements is cap-



turing accurately the game at the project’s heart. “That’s something where my basketball background comes

into play because I’m really able to direct and let my animators know what looks real, what doesn’t look real and what doesn’t work,” says White. “The basketball moments have to definitely be authentic or the basketball community would know right away.”

While developing the show into an animated series is White’s primary goal, he also has his eye on its use as an educational tool that can be used in venues like schools, basketball camps and the YMCA.

All the production is done in-house, even finishing touches like the music. “The music complements the actual story and the direct narrative of the cartoon, and it always features two artists, Mike Bogan and Queon’té Wright,” says White.

“Hip-hop and basketball, along with animation, is I think what makes this cartoon definitely unique and different.”



Terrell White

***City of Hoops* can be found online at www.cityofhoops.com.**

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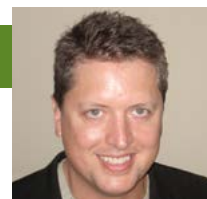


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Autonomous Animator

By Martin Grebing



Breaking Through the Earnings Ceiling

Now that you have a pool of wonderful clients generating a steady stream of recurring projects and your production pipelines are humming more efficiently than ever, it's only a matter of time until you hit your next, major obstacle: the earnings ceiling.

If everything feels good and your business is going according to plan, why does this happen? First and foremost, the only thing that is certain about a business plan is that businesses don't go according to plan. Secondly, if you are the sole proprietor of your business and you are the only one generating revenue, there are only so many hours in a week therefore only so much revenue you can generate. A super-human animator may be able to work 100 hours in a week, but it's physically and mentally impossible to keep up this pace over the long term. Besides, why would you want to put yourself through this level of pain and suffering when the whole idea of being independent is to earn your freedom while truly enjoying the journey?

If you persist on being a one-person army, you will forever be doomed to the 1:1 earnings ratio. That is, earning one wage for one person's work one day at a time.

This sets you up for being bound to your desk, only earning money when you are working your fingers to the bone. What's the point of trying to be independent if you are really only buying yourself a job? Working on your own terms is a massive improvement from working for someone else, but you will not truly be free until you become financially free. And the 1:1 earnings ratio is most certainly not the solution for financial freedom; it's the tried, tested and true recipe for cyclical stress, late nights, little sleep and even less vacation.

To break this cycle and achieve a quantum

leap in revenue, you must make the shift from being a *doer* of your thing to a *marketer* of your thing.

When you are working by yourself and it's your responsibility to produce all the work, you can only do one project at a time for one client at a time. You get to keep a lion's share of the earnings, but you are still bound to a linear earnings model. Once you take a few steps back and view your business from the big picture, you will see this is a very limiting *modus operandi*. The only way to take your business to the next level is to land multiple projects and have them produced simultaneously. But if you

dled by your team of independent contractors. Sure, you will pay out a fair share of each project to your team, but now you will receive a cut of the earnings from half a dozen projects happening simultaneously instead of most of the earnings from a single project.

And perhaps the best part of this model – you won't be doing any of the production (unless you really want to). Suddenly, your 1:1 earnings ratio has catapulted to 6:1 while actually doing *less* work. At this point, all you are doing is essentially managing and overseeing these projects while your team is happily cranking out top-tier content

that will make your clients happy and grateful.

Once you have gone through this process a few times, you may even feel comfortable turning over the project management responsibilities to a qualified professional, thereby officially freeing up all of your time to focus on making it rain with new projects. Once you have filled your current team and project manager to capacity with projects, it's time to build another team under another project manager, taking your earnings capacity from 6:1 to 12:1 or more. Ultimately, you may want to delegate your marketing responsibilities to a seasoned marketing

guru, officially freeing you to your own devices while earning more money than you ever have before. True freedom: achieved.

Martin Grebing is an award-winning animation director and producer who has focused his career on smaller studios and alternative markets. Today, he provides private consulting and is the president of Funnybone Animation, a boutique studio that produces animation for a wide range of clients and industries. He can be reached via www.funnyboneanimation.com.



are only one person, how can you achieve this? You need to stop working and start marketing. Instead of landing one project at a time then hitting the brakes on your marketing efforts so you can produce the project all by your lonesome, you need to hand the project over to any of the qualified professionals in your talent pool (see *Animation Magazine* #244, November 2014) and redouble your marketing efforts to land even more projects.

With some persistence and creative guerrilla marketing tactics, you can quickly land five or six projects that will be confidently han-



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A Wachowski Space Opera

The filmmakers go for the exotic but familiar in *Jupiter Ascending*, designing new alien races, out of this world environments and crazy physics-bound action sequences. By Bill Desowitz.

Now we know what it would be like if the Wachowskis made a *Star Wars* movie, because *Jupiter Ascending* – in theaters Feb. 6 – is their kind of *Matrix*-y sci-fi. Channing Tatum plays a bad-ass interplanetary warrior who surfs through space on anti-gravity boots and Mila Kunis plays a janitor with royal blood. It's got wild tech, crazy stunts, baroque planets and cool CG creatures.

But, with a twist: "Andy and Lana wanted to create a large-scale space opera, and in some of our early meetings they discussed how they wanted to keep it grounded," says visual effects supervisor Dan Glass, who is cur-

rently working with the siblings on the *Sense8* Netflix series. "And they were very keen about the way the stunt performances were physically driven. So even though Channing Tatum's Cain Wise has gravity boots, they wanted it to feel like snowboarding or some kind of surfing or extreme sports. And they wanted the action that was captured or created digitally to carry that through.

"They were also very particular about the animation being very limited or highly based on physical reference, including the way your muscles twitch or the way you shift your weight. Another aesthetic aspect was that

they wanted the visuals to be somewhat familiar, even though there are vastly superior technologies and a series of ancient races living in far-off planets."

And the Wachowskis liked the idea that, somehow, these alien civilizations informed our own mythologies. This included how the Keepers and Sargon looked. They are the first all-CG creatures in the Wachowski canon and were animated by Framestore. The Keepers are modeled after the iconic alien "grays" and the Sargon are flying lizards.

"The idea here is that people glimpsed these creatures at one time but nobody be-



The Wachowskis sought to bring a mix of the real and the unreal to the visual effects in *Jupiter Ascending*, which stars Channing Tatum and Mila Kunis.



lieves them," Glass says. "The Keepers and Sargon are both anthropomorphic. The Sargon were designed to be more like dragons but took their own shape because they needed the right ferocity and torque and they had to wield a weapon and fight. For the fight scene with the main Sargon at the refinery, the interaction is significant. And that took a great deal of planning, animation revision and improvisation on set. This action sequence involved

wrestling with a seven-foot stunt double and Tatum spinning from complex wire rigs and looking like he was skating on his anti-gravity boots."

Surfing the Windy City

The thrilling Chicago chases, meanwhile, were handled by Double Negative, which built an assortment of rigs, including a new six-camera rig called the Panocam, which was mount-

ed on a helicopter and covered nearly 180 degrees of action. During post, they could then blend the footage to create a more complex shot.

"The stunt team arrived early to conjure body languages and ways to build rigs that could capture massive and long single stunts," Glass says. "We built up a lot of pieces either by building horse treadmills that we would suspend at angles with actors on wires that were flung around, or a clever rig that was built inside of the back of a pickup truck with Channing and Mila suspended from it while driving around the streets of Chicago. The body language was awesome. The ultimate stunts were literally hanging two stunt doubles from helicopters flown through Chicago at dawn shot from different vantage points.

"But rather than shooting millions of stills from rooftops that are pasted together with basic geometry to build cities, which doesn't look quite right, Double Negative devised this camera rig where they could shoot massive wired-view plates and fly along the path that we had planned in previs. And that was amassed by six Red cameras that had to be stitched together with vast amounts of data. And the look of that really paid off. You can see all the reflections in windows and other surfaces."

As far as the look of the alien worlds (under the guidance of production designer Hugh Bateup and VFX designer John Gaeta, who did early concept work with a team of artists), they went for something exotic, yet familiar, in a gothic sort of way. That's because the Wachowskis wanted us to connect with the environments. Architecturally, for example, they took medieval vaulted ceilings and turned them on their sides.

Then, in the middle of the movie, the Wachowskis hilariously pay homage to *Brazil* with an eight-minute sequence about infuriating bureaucracy complete with the same retro look of the Terry Gilliam cult favorite. In fact, Gilliam has a scene-stealing cameo.

"He literally came in for a day where he plays a character with a big monocle and poodles around and goes up to the machine and it smokes and sparks and laser etches the seal into Mila's wrist," Glass says.

It's all part of the Wachowski fun of looking forward and back and the same time.

Bill Desowitz is owner of Immersed in Movies (billedesowitz.com), author of *James Bond Unmasked* (jamesbondunmasked.com) and a regular contributor to Thompson on Hollywood and Animation Scoop at Indiewire.

Tech Reviews

by Todd Sheridan Perry

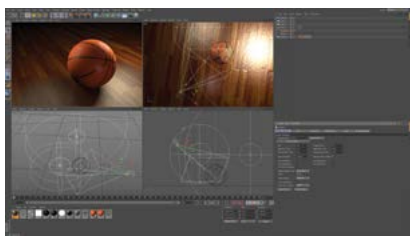


Maxon's Cinema 4D

Maxon released its substantial upgrade to R16 back in Vancouver during SIGGRAPH to much acclaim and attention. Throngs of artists surrounded the booth watching demonstrations and presentations of the new features and workflows.

The new toolset is deep, but the highlights (for me, anyway) are those that strengthen C4D's position in visual effects pipelines used in high-end places like Prologue Film and Creative Cantina.

The most obvious addition is a built-in camera tracker for integrating the CG into live-action plates. Usually, one would have to go to another program to get the camera that you would import back into C4D. By having the process inside C4D, you not only bypass the expense of the tracking software, but also the technical glitch-



es that happen when moving assets between programs. The tracker is robust enough, with all the proper tools like masks for excluding moving objects and both auto and manual trackers, that you should be able to track at least 90 percent of the shots thrown at you.

Equally important but perhaps less obvious are additions to the shading system to incorporate a number of complex BDRF reflectance models with numerous types of Fresnel and a new Irawan model for recreating complex fabrics. And to top it off, you can have up to 16 layers of different kinds of reflections controlled by masks – all of which can be rendered out as multipass layers. Extremely powerful stuff

Maxon also is creating new modeling workflows with the Polygon Pen – a simple name for a sophisticated tool. Basically, Maxon wants you to be able to model with as few extraneous clicks as possible. So the polygon pen changes its mode and functionality based on the hotkeys and context it is being used in. Edge loops, extrusions, subdividing, and more, are all accessible without explicitly clicking on other tools or buttons. This increases productivity dramatically.

These are the primary features, of many, that caught my interest. Please check out their site for more modeling and sculpting enhancements, UV tools, new tags, and more.

The Foundry's Nuke Studio

In the post-production world, there is nothing more frustrating than the constant change of the project as the clients find their way to what they want. Edits change. Color changes. Visual effects change. And all are inextricably intertwined. Adobe has already attempted to untangle the web by tying Premiere Pro to After Effects, Audition, and Speed Grade. And now, The Foundry, known best for its compositing tool, Nuke, has merged the Nuke flagship with its conforming tool, Heiro, and birthed Nuke Studio.

Nuke Studio is presented as an end-to-end post solution that should work for individual artists up to studios. Taking the foundation from Heiro, projects are either created as an edit, or conformed from an edit, and all the media is being tracked through the media management database. Each of these shots in the cut may have additional translations (move, rotate, scale) or color corrections, retimes, and all the goodness that editors put into the cut. In Nuke Studio, this includes GPU-accelerated "soft" effects – meaning the effects are calculated, but not necessarily as a final version.

So now there is a nice cut and it's time to do some visual effects. When a shot is opened into Nuke, which is embedded into the Nuke Studio interface, it is opened as a Nuke script, and it already has all of the nodes that the editor applied as soft effects. The in and out points? Already set. Any color correction? Already built in. The compositor can just get to work. And if the cut changes? The values in the comp script conform.

I couldn't even hope to cover all the features because it would include everything in Nuke as well as the additional tools from Heiro to get to Nuke Studio. So really, it's the workflow that is important to understand.

Frankly, at this point, when Nuke Studio is at 1.0, it might be a little young to change your entire pipeline to it. And like many products from The Foundry, the price point is high because the users tend to have high-end clients. That being said, I would recommend that you begin looking into it now and start for a workflow conversion to be ready for the 2.0 release when it has time to mature. The power is certainly there, and I have ultimate faith that the big brains at The Foundry will continue to push the product in the right direction.



Sapphire 8

Sapphire is really the go-to set of plug-ins for motion designers and visual effects artists around the world. Their latest iteration, Sapphire 8, has plenty of new and updated effects in it.



Lightleak gives you that flare-like look that happens when light ekes into the image. Grunge provides procedural dirt, cracks, and grime. Digital Damage simulates glitches and compression errors. And Shake has been updated

to provide more controls and features, like separating the color channels during a shake.

All of this is well and good. The features will be great for getting those pristine digital images to look like they were shot with flawed equipment using flawed medium. Irony, how the closer we get to a perfect image, the further away we want to be. Yes ... all very useful tools. But, by far, the most compelling reason to get Sapphire 8 – or upgrade to it – is the Effects Builder

Effects Builder pushes Sapphire from a repository of effects, and into a tool to create the effects you need. Using the nodal paradigm familiar to Nuke, Houdini, and Digital Fusion users, one can take pre-existing effects from Sapphire and a library of presets and start piping them together to create and control brand new effects. The same process allows for creating customized transitions as well. Each new effect can be saved and shared as a new effect.

As I said, the amount of flexibility and expandability within Sapphire 8 is leading the software down a very new and exciting path. It may be a bit daunting at first for those who are used to slapping on effects and calling it a day. However, I would encourage you all to dive into this new process. It will make you a stronger digital artist than you already are.

Sapphire 8 has been developed for After Effects, Premiere Pro, DaVinci Resolve Autodesk Products (Flame, Inferno, etc.), Avid, Vegas, and OFX support (Nuke, Digital Fusion, etc.). The price is a bit steep for casual users, but GenArts has jumped on the subscription bandwagon.

Todd Sheridan Perry is a visual-effects supervisor and digital artist who has worked on features including *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, *Speed Racer*, 2012 and *Final Destination 5*. You can reach him at todd@teaspoonvfx.com.

Crave Adventure? Pick Your Poison.

Big Hero 6, Princess Kaguya and a new **Watership Down** disc are sure bets for their epic scale and finely honed artistry. By Mercedes Milligan.

Big Hero 6

[Disney, \$29.99]

One of last year's most eagerly anticipated animated flicks definitely delivered. Don Hall and Chris Williams' Marvel-inspired actioner raked in over \$400 million around the world and earned nominations for this year's Oscars, Annies, Golden Globes and

BAFTAs. Based on the comics by Man of Action, the film centers on a young robotics prodigy named Hiro, his amazing mechanical companion Baymax and the slapdash team of heroes he unites to combat a masked villain terrorizing San Fransokyo.

The DVD comes with the acclaimed theatrical short *Feast* by Disney artist

Patrick Osborne, and *Big Animator 6: The Characters Behind the Characters* featurette. The two-disc Blu-ray combo (\$39.99) tacks on *The Origin Story of Big Hero 6: Hiro's Journey*, hosted by Jamie Chung, who voices Go Go Tomago in the film; and deleted scenes with an introduction by Hall and Williams. [Release date: Feb. 24]



Watership Down

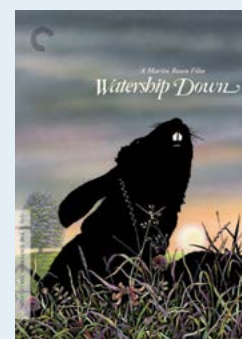
[The Criterion Collection, \$29.95]

One of the enduring classics of British animation, Martin Rosen's ambitious 1978 adaptation of the Richard Adams book is being given the home-entertainment resurrection it deserves thanks to Criterion. Available on DVD and Blu-ray (\$39.95), the release augments the high-def digital film restoration

with a new interview with Rosen, an appreciation by Guillermo del Toro, the 2008 featurette *Defining a Style*, and either picture-in-picture storyboard for the whole film (BD) or four film-to-storyboard scene comparisons (DVD). Plus, an essay by comic-book writer and historian Gerard Jones.

Watership Down was a major success when it hit U.K. theaters,

ending up in the top-10 box-office draws in the country in its year. Adams' lapine epic combines adventure, danger, magic and myth as it follows brave Hazel (John Hurt), fragile psychic Fiver (Richard Briers) and the others who have fled a doomed rabbit warren as they search for a new home, encountering terrifying threats and strange new societies along the way. [Release date: Feb. 24]



The Tale of the Princess Kaguya

[GKIDS, \$29.98]

Legendary Studio Ghibli animator Isao Takahata's latest hand-drawn masterpiece has awed audiences and critics around the world, and earned nominations for the top Oscar, Annies and Japan Academy Prize animation accolades. The centuries-old folk tale centers on a tiny girl found by a bamboo cutter inside a shining stalk – an

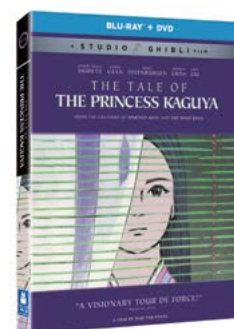
otherworldly princess who captures the hearts of all she meets, but in the end must face penance for her past crime. The English dub features the voices of Chloe Grace Moretz, James Caan and Mary Steenburgen. The DVD and Blu-ray combo (\$34.98) both include a feature-length documentary on the making of the film, the Japanese press announcement of its completion, and trailers.

Also out this month, emerging from

the Ghibli vaults to appear on Blu-ray for the first time through Walt Disney Home Entertainment, are Takahata's *Pom Poko* (1994), Hayao Miyazaki's *Porco Rosso* (1992) and Goro Miyazaki's *Tales from Earthsea* (2006). All three are out Feb. 3 for \$36.99 each.

We couldn't think of a better way to get through the end of winter than a high-def Ghibli marathon to warm your toon-lovin' heart.

[Release date: Feb. 17]



Clarence: Mystery Pinata

[Cartoon Network, \$14.97]

Cartoon Network's top-rated 2D comedy celebrates its first ever home-entertainment release this month. Yup, you can bring the gap-toothed eternal optimist over to your place for

a playdate and relive 12 imaginative adventures from the first season. Included are "Fun Dungeon Face Off," "Pretty Great Day with a Girl," "Lost in the Supermarket," "Clarence's Millions," "Jeff's New Toy," "Zoo," "Rise 'n' Shine," "Average Jeff," "Slumber Party," "Dream

Boat," "Too Gross for Comfort" and "Neighborhood Grill." Plus, you get the original pilot episode, in which poor anxious Jeff is first ruthlessly traumatized by Clarence and Sumo's attempts at friendliness.

[Release date: Feb. 10]



Game of Thrones: The Complete Fourth Season

[HBO, \$59.99]

The rising powers from all corners of Westeros continue their inexorable march to the Iron Throne. VFX magic brings the fantastical world of George R.R. Martin to life as the Lannisters face a newcomer with uncertain aims in King's Landing just in time for the royal wedding, Mance Rayder's wildling army advances on the Wall – with the gruesome White Walkers in their wake

– and Daenerys Targaryen moves to liberate the mightiest city of slaves with her army of Unsullied and her three ever growing dragons.

Not only will the five-disc set refresh your memory in time for the season five premiere in April, but you can delve even deeper into HBO's smash hit series with engaging bonus features. In *The Fallen*, writer Bryan Cogman sits down with a few of the many actors who bit the dust in season four; *The Politics of Power* reshapes the brutal events of season three; *Bastards of Westeros*

features Martin and the showrunners discussing the Seven Kingdoms' daddy issues; and *Behind the Battle for the Wall* lifts the curtain on one of the show's most intense episodes. Plus you get 11 audio commentaries with cast and crew, a guide to new characters and locations, two deleted scenes and, of course, a blooper reel. The four-disc Blu-ray set (\$79.98) exclusively features in-episode guides and a look at the histories and lore of this blood drenched world. [Release date: Feb. 17]



Q&A: Lane Lueras on *The Adventures of Puss in Boots*

DreamWorks Animation TV's Netflix original series *The Adventures of Puss in Boots* brings the daring feline hero to streaming-ready devices as five-episode chunks of the 76-episode series become available throughout the year. Supervising director Lane Lueras gave us the scoop on how his team makes it happen.

Animation Magazine: How did you get involved in the show?

Lane Lueras: I was working at another studio at the time and I was walking out, working a really late night, and I got a call from India and on the other end of it was Mark Taylor, who is running the TV end of it over here at DreamWorks. He asked me if I wanted to work on *Puss in Boots*. I was kind of floored. I was a little nervous. It was the first time someone had asked me to be a showrunner. I tried to make it sound like I had a lot going on, but I really didn't. ... I had seen the film already and I loved it. So when they told me they were going to do *Puss in Boots*, and it was going to be swashbuckling and all that kind of stuff, it was right up my alley. I said yes and handed in my resignation at the other studio.

Animag: What was your brief coming in?

Lueras: They didn't want to set it either before or after the movie, it was going to be ambiguous as to when it was. They had already done the model for Puss in Boots and it looked just like the movie. They said it was going to be a combination of the film and a lot of the stuff that I had grown up loving, which were like movies of the 1940s with Errol Flynn. ... They threw all these things at me and they said it's pretty much going to be your show. Mine and head writer Doug Langdale – I had worked with him on *Kung Fu Panda* at Nickelodeon for like three years.

Animag: What was your biggest challenge with this project?

Lueras: Absolutely no prep time! We came in and the model for Puss had been done, and I think Puss' horse had been done. They were borrowing a few characters from *Shrek*, but we wanted to push the design and those characters were not what we were thinking ... and they said, OK, the pilot is due in like a month!



Puss in Boots finds his new series' home on Netflix is perfectly to his liking.

The other challenge was obviously budget. ... We were limited in where we could go, so we had to redress sets and change lighting. The town is actually really small in terms of the CGI set that was built, so we do a lot of rooftop stuff and (Puss) jumps to the next rooftop, but it's really the same one. So, I'm using every trick that I have learned in my 20 years in this business to squeak it on by and make it look bigger than it was.

Animag: Were you able to recycle assets from the movie?

Lueras: We initially thought that we could do that, but it wasn't feasible for us because the system they used for the movie is completely different. ... The biggest benefit of the movie was the fact that we could look at it and we knew who the character was – we reference the movie a lot in those terms because the character is just rock-solid. I also refer a lot to the acting because I think the animation is amazing in the feature. Amazingly, we get a lot of subtlety too, and that's what I was going for. I didn't want to do a lot of

cartoony-type acting. As great as Warner Bros. and Tex Avery and all that jazz is, I wanted to do realistic type acting and I wanted to treat these things as if they were featurettes.

Animag: What does the animation process look like on such a brisk schedule?

Lueras: We have three teams; each team has a director and two board artists and a revisionist. They have six weeks to put a show together – and I know that sounds like a lot, but with all the acting that we're putting into these boards, and then finally going into the animatics, a lot of times they're actually animated on twos. That part of it has changed dramatically because of CGI. We're not having arrows going out, the board artists are actually walking the characters all the way out. They're doing a lot of the acting. They're really posing out the dialogue. That way, when it gets overseas they're just plussing it.

The first thing I told Mark Taylor was our animatics had to be super tight – the direction, we add music and sound effects, and of course a lot of poses. I know people will look at it and go, you guys are going overboard on it, but the show comes off just that much better. A lot of the subtleties that are actually in the show were in the animatic, so our overseas studios (Bardel in Canada and Technicolor in India) are getting that and they're just putting the icing on the cake ... with the time we have they're knocking it out of the ballpark – and I'm a super-critical guy when it comes to that stuff. ♦



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